

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Colin LaVie

Hansard, Published by Order of the Legislature

First Session of the Sixty-sixth General Assembly

Thursday, 19 November 2020

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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: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome back to all of my colleagues to the Legislature again today; a little brisk out there today, as I'm sure the questions and debate will be as always in here. And all those who are tuned in at home, I would like to say welcome as well.

I just wanted to bring to the attention of all Islanders that the Charlottetown Christmas Festival is set to begin. It will run this year from November 20th to December 13th. It's a presentation by Discover Charlottetown. It'll be a little bit different this year, but all of the nuggets that we've enjoyed will be on display and many public events, outdoor music and entertainment, and like many things, a little bit different this year in terms of COVID and protocols, but a good reason to come to Charlottetown and to celebrate the beginning of the Christmas season, which seems to be coming far too quickly for some.

I want to give a give a shout-out also to all the teachers in our province. I know that parent-teacher interviews are going to take place over the next 48 hours or so and all that has occurred in this province to get our students and teachers and professionals back into school safely – all that has gone into that has been a tremendous effort and a lot of people deserve credit. Just a shout-out to the teachers who have gone above and beyond to keep that important line of communication open between parents and guardians about the students in this province; sometimes it's been online, sometimes it's been on the phone. There will be occasion to do so in person, like always, with parent-teacher this time, but just really important to point that out.

There's been some talk about pies in this Legislature the last couple of days, of course, and I just wanted to make Islanders aware, although most know this already, but the run on meat pies has begun at Clow's

store in Hampshire. Thousands of meat pies are produced and sold by Norman Clow and his wonderful staff at Clow's store. You've got to get on a list and they're going to be a couple of weeks' time where you're only going to be allowed in two at a time because it's a very popular place for meat pies. So, I would encourage you to get your name on the list and get your order in because they go fast and they're very popular. Of course, in the wonderful riding of District 15, which I'm very honoured to represent; I should get that in as well.

Finally, I just want to say that in the last week or so, young Islanders have started to receive their books through the new partnership with the Imagination Library, delivered through the PEI Literacy Alliance: a wonderful initiative that was first brought to my attention by my friend, the Senator Diane Griffin, who, back – which seems like a lifetime ago – before COVID – came into my office and sat down and talked about this initiative. She went about getting the PEI Literacy Alliance involved. It's taken maybe a little bit longer than we thought, but now and beginning this week that young Islanders who are enrolled in this program are receiving an age-appropriate book in the mail, free of charge, until their fifth birthday; just a wonderful initiative that was first started by country music legend Dolly Parton, who bridges all generations and is quick to offer support. So, it's been an overwhelming response. Jinny and Amanda from the PEI Literacy Alliance had the full roster in the first 24 hours and have since increased the capacity in the program. We'll continue to do everything we can to support them in growing this program and bringing books into the homes of all Islanders. What a great gift we can give our children, is a good book to call their own.

I just want to thank everyone who has made that initiative happen.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

There are a couple of organizations that are now accepting submissions for this year's

award ceremonies. One is Music PEI, a fantastic organization that supports musicians across this province, the thousands of people who provide musical entertainment for Islanders and a great group of people. If you know somebody who you feel is deserving of a Music PEI award, please come forward and nominate them.

The other organization who has open nominations is the PEI Senior Islanders of the Year. Each year, they nominate three people who are designated as seniors of the year. Again, if you know somebody who is a senior who you feel is worthy of that designation, come forward and nominate them, please.

A couple of other people I'd like to mention: Luke Ignace, who I'm sure many in this House are aware of, Luke's an extraordinary young man. He's originally from the Bahamas, now living on Prince Edward Island and he's in the process of creating a nonprofit organization called Island to Island. One Island being the Bahamas, the other being Prince Edward Island, of course and he's doing extraordinary things to help particularly, the folks down in the Bahamas and the recovery to Dorian where they were – I know it PEI hard, but the Bahamas were absolutely devastated. Luke's doing extraordinary work there and I just want people to know that they're accepting donations. I think today is the last day between 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. at their warehouse on Longworth Avenue, it's right next to Pressed 4 Time.

If any Islanders out there have things they would like to donate to that very worthy cause, please come forward and do that.

Finally, it's my daughter's 32nd birthday today. Happy birthday, Kate in Montréal. I haven't seen her for almost a year now so I'm hoping to get up there at some point and visit her and our little grandson but that may have to wait for a while. Anyway, happy birthday to your Kate.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, it's certainly a privilege to rise here today. I'd also like to say hello to everyone back in the wonderful District of Evangeline-Miscouche and I never had the opportunity yet this session to say hi to my mother-in-law, Mary Morris, who watches the proceedings most of the time and I hope she's watching this afternoon.

I, as well as the Premier, would like to also thank the teachers, all staff in our schools, but a special thank you to school bus drivers. I dropped off two of my grandkids this morning at the school bus stop and they whipped their masks on before they got out of the vehicle and I looked at the bus driver and he opened the door and yelled hello, Sonny and I waved back, I'm not quite sure who he was because it was too far away and my eyes are getting a little – I need glasses on, but I said hello back at him. I used to drive a bus when I was younger, as a casual bus driver, and it's a pretty responsible job. My hats go off to them and kudos to all school bus drivers for keeping our children safe.

Tomorrow, November 20th from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., UPEI will be holding a virtual fall open house. This has been designed to give prospective students a virtual campus tour and also allows them to meet recruiting reps and find out about programs offered at the university. While folks may not be able to view the university in person, this will allow them to see the possibility and the opportunities at UPEI.

Also, I, too, would like to mention, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition said, the deadline for the seniors Island awards is December 16th and, as we all know, there are many, many, many deserving seniors out there for things they've done to lay the path work for us, and for us to sit in this Legislature here today. Anybody that feels a senior is deserving of this award, nominate them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour to rise in the House today and welcome back all of my colleagues for what I'm sure will be another productive day.

I'd like to say hello to everyone who is watching at home and, in particular, to my mother. It is her birthday today and I would like to acknowledge that. I would have loved to have spent the day with her, but I'm very fortunate to be here today. We did have a birthday party for her on the weekend but, due to COVID restrictions, we couldn't invite most of her friends, so if we didn't invite you, please don't take it personally, but give her a call today and wish her a happy birthday.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise here today. I'd like to say hi to everybody out in Mermaid-Stratford that's watching today. I would like to just recognize that it's actually a really exciting time in Stratford because we now got a hardware store; we've got the Kinlock Home Hardware that opened. If anybody's familiar with the Stratford area, we always had Southport Home Centre and that was one of the first places that I worked once I was eligible to work. A hardware store in a community is a very special place, because you go there to meet your neighbours. The people that work there know everything pretty much that you're doing, whether it's building a shed, building a house. Really, Southport Home Centre I think changed the landscape of Stratford and area because they pretty much helped build most of the houses over there; they were open for such a long period of time.

It's been missed. When I worked there it was Joe Corcoran that owned it, and what was funny was – if you'll indulge me – there was initiation that some of the older contractors used to do when you worked there. So you could be sent for a steam bucket. And if you're not familiar with what a steam bucket is, it doesn't exist but that didn't stop you from rushing all around the store to try to help that customer because it was all about customer service – or a left-handed monkey wrench.

Those are some really good times that I remember at Southport Home Centre, but first and foremost, the staff that used to be there that I worked with are still working hard in the community and around the community. I'm just excited that we have that community space open again. Congratulations to Peter Smith and Duane MacDonald for opening up that great location.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to, yesterday – or today in the news, I guess – but, yesterday really the announcement to my riding in Cornwall-Meadowbank of the RCMP Maypoint detachment is moving out there and I just wanted to shout-out to Jennifer Ebert and Mayor McCourt and Dean Lewis and CEO Kevin Coady and the councilors, and of course, the federal government.

I can remember – this has been on and off for – it's got to be over 20 years. It's finally happening and it's all a tribute to the arterial highway is really what has done this. It's always nice to have a presence of the RCMP in your community and we'll open our arms up for them. I appreciate them coming to Cornwall.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

It's certainly a pleasure for me to rise today in the House and say hello to all my constituents, family and friends in District 6 Stratford-Keppoch.

I'd also like to say a hello to my mom at Beach Grove Home and the incredible staff that work in that facility caring for our seniors. And also to all my girlfriends at St John House, I know they're regularly tuning in and I just wanted to say hello and again, thank them for their generosity in the recent food drive.

I picked up on something last night on social media and I just wanted to share it quickly with my colleagues here today. This was the thread that I read last night and I thought it was very pertinent.

So verbatim: I was on the phone with a customer service representative today. The woman on the other end asked for my billing address. She said: An Island, that's so nice. And we launched into talking about COVID. She asked how many cases we currently have. I said: Three. She was silent. She was calling from California. They had over 8,000 new cases and 32 deaths in that day alone. In total, they have surpassed one million cases since the pandemic began. Here, that would mean every single Islanders would have had COVID already, six times. We talked for a while and we went to hang up. I said: Take care. She got slightly emotional before she said: You too.

I've never deeply cared for a service rep I met over the phone, but I couldn't help but worry that tomorrow she would be part of a new 8,000 or 32. I don't think people realize the magnitude of our luck, the magnitude of what we have been able to accomplish to date. PEI, we are being asked to wear a mask. Please, please just do it.

The world is yearning for what we have here. Do not chance this. #maskup.

I want to thank Alyssa MacKinnon for giving me the permission to share this with my colleagues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McNeilly: Great, I have to go after that. Well done.

Just wanted to say a special hello to everybody in District 14 out there today. Just wanted to let people know that at PE Home they usually have an annual residents' council Christmas tea and sale. Obviously, with the COVID restrictions and the pressures on our long-term care and facilities, they have had to make changes. But I want to let our community know that

PE Home is doing a silent auction and that's starting November 28th to December 4th and they're asking for donations and bake sales. If any time ever in the history of Prince Edward Island we can help the people living in long-term care facilities and areas like this, I think it's this year. So, I want to thank the group of fitness enthusiasts in my world that are helping out with that. All proceeds will go to the residential council there for activities.

Saying hello to everybody at PE Home; thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Land.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to bring some acknowledgements. The management team of ADL yesterday did their – they went on farm to participate. The CEO, Chad Mann, went to – when I called him yesterday, he was milking cows. That's what ADL is all about. It's cooperative-owned and their staff and employees really get the feel of what dairy farming is all about. I just wanted to acknowledge the team of ADL.

And 4-H is back; 4-H on the Island started up last month. It's definitely different than most years, but I'm such a huge advocate of 4-H. I grew up through the 4-H program and I hope the kids can have a great experience even through this year. We want to thank the volunteers that help out with that.

To my district, beautiful Stanhope-Marshfield, I want to give acknowledgement to Mr. Doug MacCallum. I ran into him last week and he was telling me he has this old cow that kicked him for the last time. He said: I wanted to do something good with her. So he donated all the meat from this cow to the food bank, so I want to give a shout-out to Doug for a very noble thing and – not so well for the cow, but Mr. Speaker, Doug did well.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker's Ruling

Speaker: Hon. members, the Honourable Member for Charlottetown-Belvedere rose on a point of order, noting that all Members should be referring to each other by district or portfolio, not by “he” or “she” or by name.

I will remind all Honourable Members to refer to each other by portfolio or district in the Chamber, which can help in keeping the debate in the Chamber from becoming too personal.

I will also remind all Honourable Members that they should address the Chair in their remarks, and not the House.

I do not find the reference to the members using pronouns to be out of order, as it can help with the flow of debate in the Chamber, but that all remarks toward other members should be respectful. It is out of order to use language or words offensive towards the House or any member.

I hope this serves to clarify this matter.

Thank you.

Statements by Members

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

Lights for Life

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I recently had the opportunity to make a gift to Lights for Life in support of the Prince County Hospital Foundation.

Since 1995, Lights for Life has been an important part of the PEI community: a vital fundraiser for the Prince County Hospital and an opportunity to remember and honour your loved ones during the holiday season.

This year, respecting the current restrictions for large gatherings, the Prince County Hospital Foundation will be unable to have their usual community event. They have, however, created a new way to bring the celebration to life while ensuring everyone can safely enjoy the lights, the music, and the experience of Lights for Life. Starting December 2nd and running until December 31st, the lights at Prince County

Hospital will come on nightly at 5:30 p.m. as usual. New this year, though, you will be able to view the full Lights for Life show set to music from the comfort of your car at 7:00 p.m. and again at 8:00 p.m. each of those nights. You can bring your whole family, tune in on the radio, and enjoy the show from the Prince County Hospital parking lot from the warmth and comfort of your car.

You can also dedicate a light or display in honour or in memory of a loved one or someone that you have appreciated. It is my honour to be able to dedicate a light this year, in this year’s display, in memory of my grandmother, Pat Altass.

All gifts to Lights for Life support the purchase of much needed medical equipment for patients at the Prince County Hospital. This year, the PCH Foundation has been working to raise funds for items such as cardiac monitors, birthing beds, a blood count analyzer and much more. Donations made before November 21st will be included in the annual Lights for Life dedication book that will be available after December 3rd at the Prince County Hospital. Donations can be made at pchcare.com or at the foundation office in the hospital lobby.

As they say, at the PCH Foundation, even a little light can mean a lot.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Stratford High School

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the last sitting of this House, we heard about \$55 million in infrastructure spending with the lion’s share going to paving roads. It’s true that Islanders love their roads and appreciate when work is done to them so it was a welcome announcement from government.

To defend the expenditure on roads, the Minister of Finance pointed to the requirement of shovel-ready projects to qualify for the funding. To be shovel ready, we need a government that will be

committed to vision, one that has the foresight to plan in advance.

Without that, we risk constantly playing catch up on our infrastructure needs and that has a direct impact on our communities.

I represent a district that has never had adequate capacity within its school system. Currently, according to the enrolment numbers tabled by the minister, Charlottetown Rural High School is at 120% capacity. That's 189 students more than the school's capacity. This issue is only growing and continuing to grow, especially with the rate that the Town of Stratford is growing. In fact, Stratford is the fastest growing community in Atlantic Canada.

What does this mean for our students? By the time this government gets around to opening the new high school in Stratford, Charlottetown Rural High School is estimated to be 397 students over capacity. This is not a surprise. These numbers have been around for years.

Having a vision for the Island includes looking ahead by more than a year to ensure that you are putting plans in place to meet the needs of Islanders, not just for tomorrow, but for five, 10 and 20 years down the road.

Planning for the infrastructure we need, at the very least for the next five years, should be priority, so that when we have the opportunity to leapfrog a capital project, we can do more than just pave the driveway to that building.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Renting in PEI

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Renting in PEI: A Guide for Tenants is a new resource available online and as a printed booklet published by the Community Legal Information Association. This guide empowers renters and landlords through plain language to know their rights and responsibilities. The guide is available online at rentingpei.ca in English, French,

Mandarin and Arabic and is also being distributed to libraries and community partners across the province.

This guide and the associated online tenant support centre assist tenants on PEI by providing legal information, referrals, as well as support during the rental hearing process. It is a project of the Community Legal Information Association, funded by the PEI Provincial Government.

CLIA also delivers workshops on tenants' rights and responsibilities, with all of these services being provided free of charge to the public.

Congratulations and a thank you to the whole team at the Community Legal Information Association who do exactly what they say, empowering through knowledge.

I also want to acknowledge government for providing the funding that allows great projects like this to become reality. It also speaks to the complexity and challenges Islanders face because of the *Rental of Residential Property Act*, the law that applies to most residential tenants in PEI.

That legislation is long overdue for updating, to not only make it more accessible and relevant, but to address systemic issues and challenges for both tenants and landlords in the rental relationship. The legislation has been drafted, gone to public consultation and was due to be tabled in the House this past spring, but now it is unlikely we will see it until the fall of 2021.

When the government does not make an issue like housing a priority at the executive level, then resources are not provided to ensure critical legislation and behind the scenes data and research are in place. The responsibility to paper over the gaps with resources like the Tenant Support Centre and the Renting on PEI guide, get downloaded to the community sector, who are themselves underfunded and under-resourced.

I know this guide will be invaluable to Islanders and I encourage all tenants to access it in print or online. It is the most

valuable resource they have available to them at this time, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Response to questions from the hon. Leader of the Third Party from yesterday about the Kettle Campaign.

The PEI Liquor Commission is pleased to continue their partnership with the Salvation Army for their annual Kettle Campaign. At the Salvation Army's request, it was agreed that the Oak Tree store in Charlottetown, the Granville store in Summerside, would participate. However, the Salvation Army is waiting for the freestanding tiptap units, which the Charlottetown branch have proposed to the commission instead of the kettles, and subsequently, the Summerside branch agreed to. If the Salvation Army is able to obtain additional tiptap units, the commission will gladly place those in other liquor stores of their choosing – meaning the Salvation Army.

The PEILCC has stopped all monthly canisters for various organizations due to COVID-19. The PEILCC is discouraging, like many other retailers across the province, payments with cash if another means is available. As a result of the measures put in place by PEILCC locations, there is now limited counter space to place canisters, the plexiglass barriers put in place at the beginning of the pandemic, and sufficient place must be allowed within the store to ensure proper physical distancing can be maintained for the safety of Islanders within their stores.

The PEILCC will participate in this campaign, although in a different format from previous years, as we continue to abide by the public health measures put in place by the CPHO. The Salvation Army will also be a recipient of the PEILCC Gift of Giving campaign this year to further our support of their organization and the work that they do. In discussions with the Salvation Army, both within Charlottetown and Summerside, they had advised of a December 1st start date

for this campaign and that their freestanding touchless tiptap units will be set up in the two participating PEILCC stores by that date.

I encourage all members, if you're not familiar with tiptap, to check it out online. I think it will be the way we all donate in the future, especially at retail locations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister Responsible for Charlottetown.

Ms. Jameson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a follow up to questions from the Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere yesterday, I would like to provide the following information.

As per section 24 of the CADC bylaws, the general manager of CADC reports to the board. In February 2018, Cabinet appointed an interim board of deputy ministers and the CAOs of Charlottetown and Stratford. This board provided direction to the general manager and approval of projects until the new board was appointed.

The hon. member made reference to a document requested under freedom of information, which I have provided to her yesterday. This email had a list of project updates. I'm happy to table this document later in the House.

In addition to the project updates in this email, CADC is now managing a construction of a bio-accelerator building in the BioCommons.

Lastly, I will table the Engage PEI listing which lists the skills and attributes we are looking for in the candidates. Government's representatives, as well as those from Charlottetown and Stratford, come from a wide range of backgrounds, both from an employment and community involvement standpoint, and bring a substantial amount of experience and a very broad perspective relating to arts, culture, housing and wellbeing.

I am pleased to see this board is balanced and diverse, and welcome the newly

appointed members. I look forward to the great work they will help us accomplish.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

A critical part of PEI's economic strength and development, and certainly part of this Island's post-COVID economic recovery, will be making sure that housing is available and affordable to all Islanders. The Provincial Housing Action Plan developed by the previous administration was adopted by this government.

One of the priority areas for immediate action was to establish a Cabinet committee on housing, consisting of: Minister of Finance; Family and Human Services; transportation, infrastructure and energy; and community, land and environment to lead this government's approach to the supply of affordable housing, of market development analysis an innovation.

Status of Cabinet committee on housing

A question to the Premier: What is the status of this Cabinet committee?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for the question and I would say his caucus's continued – not just interest, but drive to help us deal with this critical issue. A lot of the departments that the hon. member outlined are no longer in existence because they are within the scope of the former government.

Throughout my short time here in government, I have had the tremendous leadership of the Minister of Social Development and Housing, who has made record investments in housing in this province. I feel we've made some significant strides in addressing the challenge with housing in this province, but I'm also the first to recognize that we still

have a long ways to go. I think you'll see some announcements when we table our capital budget about our interest and our initiative to continue to address this challenge. I just encourage all members to continue to support our government as we work towards solving this important crisis for Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

And yes, indeed: our caucus is very interested in this and we've been driving for this for some time. It's as well that somebody's driving because the government certainly doesn't seem to be.

Another one of the priority areas for immediate action was to establish a housing hub led by a special advisor and consisting of members of government, community organizations, and municipalities to implement the Housing Action Plan to report on progress, monitor market trends, and provide support to housing partners. The original special advisor for housing and infrastructure, of course, was Clifford Lee, but he's long gone. He's now selling real estate; finally doing something in housing.

It's clear that there is no coordinated responsibility or any sense of urgency in this government on housing.

Addressing of housing crisis

A question for the Premier: If you don't have any executive with the responsibility after over 18 months in government, when will you finally admit that you don't really have any plan to address the housing crisis at all?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Well, Mr. Speaker, I give the hon. leader great praise for his comment. It made me chuckle. But what also made me chuckle is for 18 months, they complained about having a special housing advisor there and they weren't happy until he was fired, and now they're wondering why we don't have one.

My issue is this: We're trying to solve the housing crisis through making investments. One of the things that we have done in 18 months here is made record investments in housing; record investments –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier King: – following up on the provincial government previous, who made record investments, not because it's political, because we have to do it. That's what we're doing. You can worry about committees. You can worry about advisors. I've got a Minister of Social Development and Housing who wakes up every day trying to solve the problem and he's doing a heck of a job.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Well, I mean, of course, we would be happy to have people in that position if they were actually doing the job that they were paid to do.

Earlier this fall, I had the chance to meet with (Indistinct) and during that meeting, they expressed a number of concerns about housing, including substandard housing and the need for increased housing investment both on and off reserve here on Prince Edward Island.

In other provinces such as British Columbia, they have stepped up to ensure that Aboriginal people have access to affordable, quality housing.

Improvement for Aboriginal housing

A question to the Premier: What specific steps are you taking to improve housing for Aboriginal people living here on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. leader for the question. It is a good question.

I believe that we have developed a very, very strong and unique partnership and relationship with our First Nations here. We talk about many things to move the First Nations people of this province forward, housing being one of them.

Look, we work with all groups – all individuals who want to put this forward. That's what we do through the social development and housing department. I'm sure the minister will be able to address many of the issues and the challenges and the success that he's been able to have in this regard through his department through many initiatives. Look, we're working really, really hard. We have seen success here. We've had success. We have work to do. There's absolutely no question about that. I don't think it's out of the realm of expectation for any Islander to expect to have a roof over their head at an affordable rate and we're working really, really hard as a government to try to provide that with all groups, associations and levels of government who want to work with us.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

We need to make no mistake; we're in a housing crisis here on Prince Edward Island, as the Premier has admitted in some of his answers.

I hear from young people all over the province who dream of owning a home here, but those dreams are crushed because there's no way that they can come forward with the amount of money for a down payment. I hear from people in Charlottetown here who simply cannot find an apartment, let alone find one that they can afford.

How can we expect to attract the doctors and the nurses and the other health professionals that we so desperately need to come here in this housing crisis if there's no housing available for them? I know this is a completely complex issue, I understand that, but Islanders simply cannot wait for a government to step in and do something, anything in fact.

Housing is a human right and this government is failing Islanders, no matter how strongly the Premier stands up and says that his minister responsible for housing is doing a great job, we are failing Islanders.

Commitment to housing crisis on PEI

A question to the Premier: Government responded to the COVID pandemic really quickly and appropriately to keep Islanders safe. We need to do exactly the same thing on the housing file. Will you finally commit to doing something about the housing crisis here on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say that the answer to addressing the housing situation, crisis, whatever you want to call it in this province, is to build more housing and that's exactly what we're doing.

I think, in the last 15 years, we've seen a growth through immigration and other population measures where we focus too much of our efforts as a province to bring people here without actually providing the necessary infrastructure and growth housing, et cetera and since then, we've been playing catch up. There's no question about that.

I've been in the job for 18 months and we've spent hundreds of millions of dollars to invest in housing. We can't build them fast enough. I understand that but we're doing everything we can. We've addressed it considerably; we've built hundreds of units, not just in Charlottetown, not just in Summerside but in Alberton, in Georgetown and every place in between. We're working at breakneck speed to answer the needs that Islanders have.

We're 15 years behind and we're trying to play catch up and it's a difficult file, I'm the first to say, but we're doing everything we can and we're going to do even more.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A critical aspect of the economy functioning successfully involves people having disposable income.

No more than 25% of your income should be going to housing, but I hear from people all the time who are spending much more than that on their rent and mortgage. I can appreciate that vacancy rates may have gotten marginally better but the cost of housing, rent has gone up in this province. Telling people to spend locally is a moot point when they don't have anything to spend.

We either need to bring the cost of housing down or wages need to go up. Getting serious on the economy means getting serious on the housing market.

Rent costs in PEI and support to economy

Question to the Premier: How are people supposed to put money back in the economy if they can't even afford their rent?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Mr. Speaker, as I have continued to say in here, we're working at incredible pace to try to address these needs, which we are quite honestly, 15 years behind and playing catch up on. There's absolutely no question about it.

I think it depends on where you live in this province when you base the rent – it's certainly, in our urban areas for sure, I think it's – the cost of living has increased considerably for sure. I think that's a challenge, 100%, I understand that and I respect that.

Through our voucher program, our mobile voucher program and other initiatives that we've put forward, we're trying to do everything we can to assist those who need it.

But look, absolutely, there's a challenge here that we're trying to address and, as I've been saying here for a few minutes now, we're 15 years behind and playing catch up, but we're making good gains, but we need to make more.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree that government is investing in housing and I'm happy to see that but that's only one part of this. It's incredibly important.

The cost of housing has gone up substantially in Summerside and people are struggling to live. The rent subs are not going to cut it for people who have mortgages to pay.

I've asked the Premier about his plan for economic recovery and he was reluctant to take ownership in creating the plan, which I find concerning.

The Premier needs to set the foundation for a successful economic recovery and deciding what part of that recovery, what will be part of that recovery, is a key role for him.

We have seen two summary reports from the Premier's economic recovery council and neither of them address housing.

Appointment to Premier's recovery council

Question to the Minister of Social Development and Housing: Your government says it's taking this seriously. Did you raise that as a concern to the Premier that no one was appointed to this council to speak to the housing needs?

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

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

When you look at the membership of the committee, we have representation from right across the Island sectors. There's going to be input from these members with regard to housing.

I would like to go back just to follow up on a couple of comments in the great answers, responses that the Premier has given. Yes, when we came to government back in 2019, I have to say we inherited a bit of a mess with regard to housing.

Mr. Myers: A big mess.

Mr. Hudson: A big mess, thank you. What we have done is we have added 15 million in the Operating Budget and the Capital Budget to housing. I'll just leave it at this: we will have another Capital Budget that will be tabled shortly and we'll take it from there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister says that we will be seeing housing addressed even though no one is appointed but two reports have come forward, housing isn't even mentioned at all.

Housing prices have gone up almost 20% in just one year, but wages have barely increased at all on PEI. We once had a valued proposition as an affordable place to live and work and that's just simply not the case anymore. In fact, government policy is actively making that less true.

For more and more young people, dreams of home ownership and starting a family are becoming all but impossible.

Attracting people to PEI and cost of living

A question to the Premier: How can government attract people to live and work here if the people who live here now are struggling to afford it?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Mr. Speaker, I will point out that, for the fourth or fifth year in a row, I believe that we've led the country in per capita population growth so there must be a reason they're coming here. It's not the doom and gloom that gets painted over here each and every day from the opposition party.

Most people in PEI are very happy with Prince Edward Island, happy how well we've done through the pandemic that we led the country and perhaps the world in our response. The doom and gloom that gets cast here some days makes me wonder how

some of us have the courage to get out of bed some days to face it.

Having said all of that, I don't know the full background of my hon. colleague from Summerside-Wilmot in terms of her background in what she has done in her professional career, but in the quick glance I gave to her biography, it didn't say anything about her being an expert in housing, but I know she likes housing. She doesn't have to come from that to care about housing. The 40 some people that we have on our committee who are Islanders who care from tip-to-tip, just because they may not represent one particular area, doesn't mean they do not care about Prince Edward Island as a whole and all of the things we need to do to improve it.

I would just caution the member to say that because maybe somebody doesn't have housing next to their name, doesn't mean that they do not care about it. I think just the opposite.

As I said in previous Question Periods, regardless of whether you're Ray Keenan, a potato farmer from the east or Darrin Mitchell from Trout River, each and every one of them come forward and said we need a basic income for Prince Edward Island.

It doesn't matter where you come from or what you do, it's what you're all about and Islanders care about each other and we all do in here and we should.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, you can say that all you want but housing was not in that report.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bernard: Tuesday night, we were fortunate to have advocates out here on the front lawn at the Legislature sharing their stories with us. We heard just how difficult it is to access addictions and mental health services on PEI and we heard from one brave gentleman who shared his story of trying to do this while also being homeless.

Being homeless adds even more hurdles, abuse and lack of respect to his journey in getting help.

Additional housing for struggling Islanders

Question to the minister of health: I'm aware that you announced more housing is being built next year under the Mental Health Campus, but it's getting cold and these units will not be ready by the time the snow flies. What additional housing will you provide this winter for those struggling with addictions?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

There was a lot of rumours going around and misinformation previously, too, about Deacon House and it was closing. That was completely incorrect. I don't know where it came from but Deacon House continues to operate.

That's the unfortunate thing right now; that there's a lot of misinformation out there about what services are available and what government and NGOs, in fact, are doing. We've got a great relationship with the Canadian Mental Health Association and some of the structured housing that they're providing.

If there's specific cases – if there's specific concerns – please bring them to me, but I feel very strongly that the services that are in place right now are doing well. Can we do better? Yeah, we can always do better and we'll strive to do better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That didn't really answer the question, so I'm going to take that as there's nothing new happening this winter.

Imagine for a moment that after we left this Legislature today, you had no house to go

home to. Imagine walking out of here, going to potentially pick up your children, pick up your partner, and not having anywhere to take them. You may have a friend's couch that you can sleep on. Maybe there's a shelter you could go for the night if you don't have children, because there's nowhere to take your children for the night. Imagine the stress and shame that you would be feeling right now.

In the past two weeks, I have had two constituents reach out to me who have been recovering alcoholics for years, but the lack of housing and near homelessness that they are currently facing has sadly pushed them to start using again. That is two true accounts.

Question to the minister of health: The stress of not having a home is literally causing people who are in recovery to relapse. What are you going to do about it?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

As I've said repeatedly here, we're about to begin construction on Lacey House. Originally, that facility is, which, as it stands now, is six beds. We're moving to 12 beds.

Also, the Minister of Social Development and Housing: his department has recently taken over Smith Lodge. That will be also in-field – in-stream to provide housing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Smith Lodge: that opens well into my next question.

On PEI, women living with homelessness have two options when in need of shelter. There's one in Charlottetown where you can go for literally just to sleep and one in Lennox Island. If you are a woman with a child, there is no shelter, unless, of course, you live with domestic abuse, and then you have Anderson House.

Recently, there was an announcement that Smith Lodge will open as a men's shelter.

Providing of resources to women

Question to Minister responsible for the Status of Women: When will you convince your government to prioritize women and provide appropriate resources for them and their children who have no place to call home?

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

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

I actually take great insult to that because I am a strong advocate for women and I ensure that women's needs are always addressed here in Cabinet and that's something that I really pride myself on. If I look at the housing supports that we do have for women, I mean, I've had a number of conversations with Anderson House, as well as Blooming House, and I know that there is a study being underway in Summerside. Certainly, I feel like we've done tremendous amounts and I pride myself on government's work on this. I think we can always do better but certainly, we've done a great job. I think we've got a long way to go and I'm really looking forward to continuing this relationship, especially with the minister responsible for social development and housing, who has done a tremendous job on this file.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You take offence. Imagine how Islanders take offence. Women and children have no shelter.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bernard: What are you doing about it, minister?

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

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

As I suggested, I have had an abundance of conversations with the folks over at Anderson House, as well as Blooming House. I'm certainly proud of all the work that they've done there to support women and families.

As I had recently suggested, there is a study underway to determine housing needs for women in the Summerside area and I know my colleague, the Minister of Social Development and Housing can speak more to it, but I understand there are some housing that's going to be developed along Beach Grove Road that will specifically help support women and families.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are lucky that in my district of Charlottetown-Brighton, we have several seniors complexes there and of course, the seniors living there all appreciate the fact that they have affordable and quality residences. But still, they have concerns that the government apparently are not hearing.

For instance, I have one resident that told me that she had had no heat for five years, but she dared not complain because she feared the consequences of being put out on the street.

Maintenance set-up for seniors housing

Question to the Minister of Social Development and Housing: Would it be possible to set up maintenance in a way so that tenants can share their complaint without fear of consequences?

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

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

Certainly, thank the hon. member for bringing this forward. I have not heard that

before but without a doubt, if it is accurate, it is of a major concern.

I think one of the things, too, that was alluded to earlier here this afternoon was with regard to CLIA and the fact that a tenant support worker is in place with funding from the Department of Social Development and Housing. This is another way that we move forward to provide assistance, to provide opportunities, to provide counseling to tenants who, for whatever reason, feel that they need additional information, that they need an ear, and that they need direction.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the minister of health today. In the last few days, or last few weeks, we've been talking about vaccines and we're seeing some promising results from Pfizer and Moderna, but there's also questions out there. The questions are: When will they be ready, how many have we secured, and who gets it first? These are all good questions and they're in the forefront of people's minds if people worry about this pandemic and we're seeing increases around the country.

Doses/storage/logistical measures for vaccine

As of yesterday, Ontario and Alberta have both asserted that they will be receiving 2.4 million. How many doses are earmarked for Prince Edward Island? Are you confident that we possess the necessary storage and logistical measures required to store the vaccines?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

This isn't a provincial initiative; it's actually a national initiative that all the provinces and territories are partnering with. Dr. Heather Morrison has provided an update

recently with regards to some of the promising vaccines.

There will be certain protocols put in place, obviously to vaccinate our most vulnerable and our frontline health care workers. Those protocols are still being worked out. Dr. Heather Morrison has also stated that she's very confident that we'll receive our first shipment in the first quarter of the next calendar year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank, your first supplementary.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, obviously the minister's been in consultations and I think the public has the right to know and to be transparent with this whole issue. I think it's important that many Islanders understand who is going to get it first, when is it going to arrive, how much did we secure as a province. Those aren't big questions to ask, I think, of the health minister, especially with what we've gone to and the wellness that we've created here on PEI with this whole procedure.

In fact, the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness asked this question in April. So we've gone April to now and we still don't have a plan in place from this government.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Information to public re: vaccine

Mr. MacDonald: That's right. Honestly, that's exactly what the answer was, Mr. Premier, was: well it's too early. Well, now we've got a month, two months, three months. It's not too early, so why would the minister not provide additional transparent information to the general public in regards to the vaccine?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Once again, it's a national initiative that we're working with the federal government on. Each province, according to their population, will be provided with a certain

percentage of vaccines. As I said, there's two right now that are very promising in their final test trials. There's a total of six vaccines that are being looked at, but until we know the exact qualification and their verification through Health Canada, we can't actually state exactly how many units will come to PEI. We, as a government, are working with the federal government and we will provide vaccines as quickly as we can get them here on PEI to our population.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank, your second supplementary.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, there's got to be a process that they've been talking about or discussing. The logistics of the vaccines, who's providing the vaccine – is it the pharmacist? How many vaccines are we getting? One of them has to be stored at minus 72 degrees. What are we going to do for storage? Can we store them at pharmacies? Are pharmacies set up for it?

These are pretty simple questions that I am sure, after listening to Alberta and Ontario announce exactly how many they're getting, if this minister can't answer these simple questions, I'm not sure – we've gone down this path before with no plan. This seems to be another path. It's pretty simple.

Can the minister not provide us any additional information? I seem to have as much information as the minister has and that's a problem because he's the minister of health on PEI.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Aylward: Okay, so Mr. Speaker, once again, there are two very promising vaccines by two different companies that are right now going through final trials. It's looking very possible that they will be approved by Health Canada.

There are an additional six vaccines from different companies currently in various stages of clinical trials. Once they go through the process, once the research is done and once they're approved by Health Canada, we will have a better idea of all of the available vaccines that are out there.

As far as the program for rolling out the vaccination process, no, it will not be done through pharmacies; it will be done through public health.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Overcrowding of students on school buses

Question to the minister of education: Earlier this fall, CUPE reported to the standing committee on education that many school buses are overcrowded with as many as 72 students on a bus. How can students be expected to social distance on a bus with 73 people?

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

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That is a very valid concern that was raised and something that we addressed as best as we could. We did, of course, have money for additional school buses that were added to the system. Were there enough to make sure we were able to bring down the number of kids on the bus so they were six feet apart? No, but we did make masks mandatory on buses to try and deal with that issue.

We see, of course, masks are mandatory in the general public. We also encouraged parents to drop their kids at school if they could to try and alleviate and get the numbers on buses down.

The good news is that we haven't seen community spread on PEI, we haven't seen cases in our school and I just want to thank the students, in particular, who have really stepped up. They've worn their masks, they've adhered to the rules and along with the teachers that have guided them, we have very safe classrooms and safe buses in our school systems.

Thank you.

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

Mr. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Many parents are a little bit nervous these days with the new rules.

During the same presentation, CUPE said to students that, in the higher grades, they're not staying within the cohorts, something that we were all worried about in those grades, too.

Supports to schools re: social distancing

Has the minister provided schools with the supports they need to ensure appropriate social distancing at that level?

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

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe that we have provided the supports as best as possible, as best as we could do under the circumstances. We worked with the CPHO and I think that's the key because we created operational plans and it was very clear in the operational plans the size of classes, as well as the distance between desks and the number of students and what was happening.

They were approved and I'm pleased to say that every single school on the Island is being inspected right now; 35 of them have been inspected so far. There have been some minor findings but, overall, we're getting a very clean bill of health.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McNeilly: With the new rules, we have to be ready. A plan has been in place but what is the trigger point for any changes? What conditions are required for the minister to issue new rules which will ensure social distancing in our schools?

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

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always, we take our cues from the Chief Public Health Office and we've seen recent

changes there where masks are now mandatory within the public, in public places and, of course, we already had them mandatory within schools, but we're really working very closely with them and the Public Schools Branch and the CSLF, in conjunction with CUPE and the PEI Teachers' Federation, are reviewing these policies on an ongoing basis. If we need to make a change when it comes, for example, with mandatory masks, right now students are allowed to take them off at their desk, we will do that.

Right now, we haven't seen that we had to make that change, but people are looking at it very closely as we speak.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We heard advice from the Chief Public Health Officer this week that non-medical masks or face coverings will be mandatory in all indoor public spaces in Prince Edward Island effective tomorrow. As a result, the Liberal opposition have received calls from a number of supportive Island business owners who – they have a lot of unanswered questions because they've received no guidance from this government as to how they are supposed to enforce this recommendation.

Support to businesses re: CPHO guidelines for masks

So, my question is to the minister of health: What have you done to ensure Island businesses are prepared and understand the new Chief Public Health Office guidelines?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Dr. Heather Morrison went public in her press conference. She stated what the policies are and the rules around it and the requirements for wearing face masks. In fact, she even talked about different type of face masks.

We have provided the information, as well, on our websites. In addition to that, we have now put available for download to print posters for businesses and public spaces.

If there's any concerns, if there's any questions, please reach out to either my office or the Chief Public Health Office and we would be more than happy to answer any questions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

This is a very recent announcement so I'm asking you now. You know, there's been a lot of, I guess, businesses that have looked online. They've listened to the announcement and they didn't get any clarity on it.

Enforcement of businesses re: masks

So, the business owners want to know: What is the expectation on Island businesses to enforce mandatory masks?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Once again, if there's businesses or if there's individuals out there that have concerns or questions, they simply just have to pick up the phone, go to our website; the information is there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, apparently, the minister is telling me the information is there, so if business owners go there and they want to know what the expectations are for them as a business owner – for someone to come in to their business, whether they're liable or not – that information is going to be found. So, we'll

go looking for that after, because businesses want to make sure that they are following the necessary protocols to keep Islanders safe, but they need support and they need clear direction from this government.

My question back to the minister of health is: Is a business owner liable if a customer or customers are not willing to wear a mask?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

The quick answer to that would be no.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hopefully I can get that quick of an answer to my questions, too.

Over the past – I guess, really, this week, I don't know about the other members in the House, but I've had a significant number of calls about rotational workers that travel outside the Atlantic bubble. I probably haven't had this many calls since I introduced my vaping bill last fall.

A significant amount of them travel outside the Atlantic bubble; two weeks on, three weeks on, and they come home and they're usually only home for a couple weeks, but there's significant confusion around the rules. They don't know if they have to isolate, if they can get tested. They're being told they can't get tested. Some say they can.

Requirements for rotational workers

My question to the Premier: What are the current requirements for rotational workers traveling outside the Atlantic bubble?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Well, Mr. Speaker, I won't be as brief as my colleague with the answer because it is somewhat of a complicated question and requires a complicated answer, I suppose.

We have about 900 what we call rotational or essential workers who are registered with the CPHO. Those are individuals who travel back and forth for work or for essential purposes. I, too, have gotten many calls, as many of my colleagues in here have. I even had one lady who called and said: Could you tell them people to stay away so I don't need to wear a mask in church? What I said to that lady was – them people she refers to are truckers and those who carry our goods and services to market. They're Islanders. They bring our fuel here so we can drive our cars. They bring our food, they bring our medicine, and they are critical to what we do.

And the CPHO has been working all along to try to make sure those that are on a rotational basis – that they have some kind of life. What they've been required to do all along is they get tested on day zero or day one, day seven and day ten – or day three 3, I believe, too – and they try to make sure that they can move around a bit, but never were they to go to large public gatherings, for example. It would allow them to be with their family, kind of like a work isolation type situation. They could go to the grocery store and actually pick up their groceries but not go actually into the store for groceries. They're not to go to the rinks.

I know it's a long answer, I'm sorry, but I will conclude simply by saying that, of the 68 cases or so that we've had, all have been imported to our province and the CPHO recently strengthened the wording around that for a temporary time because we're in the teeth of this but we're trying to do the best we can to give all of those important members of PEI and their families a chance to not be in perennial isolation when they're here.

I'm sorry for the long answer but it was a good question.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do appreciate that part of the reason we have been very successful here with COVID is that there are strict rules around isolation and the follow-ups we do with those

individuals that do travel into the Atlantic bubble.

I guess there's confusion on what's on the website, what's being said at the news conferences on the weekly updates.

Communication re: entering Atlantic bubble

Premier, is there any way that we can improve communication to these individuals so that there isn't such confusion when they do arrive inside the Atlantic bubble?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's a great question and observation. Look, I'm the first to say Dr. Morrison would be the second to say that the communication of all of this has been a tremendous logistical challenge. We're doing a lot with a limited staff and that staff we have that are so dedicated and talented are stretched sometimes. We've added resources over the course of time but what we've tried to do with our announcements, such as the one we made on Tuesday, was to let Islanders know that changes are coming. We then go about updating the information on the website and going through those channels and we're also dealing directly with those companies and individuals who would be registered.

For example, if 300 of those rotational workers were truckers, we would be dealing with the trucking companies that employ them and those individuals, as well, to make sure they get that information.

Yes, making sure that people know what to do and when to do it is critically important and we've had incredible buy-in here on Prince Edward Island with the protocols and I expect that will continue but we will continue to work on that to make sure Islanders know what they need to do and why they need to do it.

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

Mr. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think this is really coming up now because Christmas is coming. It's about a month way, and a lot of these people want to come home and be able to spend that time with their family. They're worried that they're going to get home and they're not going to be able to see their family in that two-week period.

I know I did say before, these protocols are important and it's part of the reason why we do get to have a lot of the probably less stringent restrictions than other jurisdictions.

Isolation period re: entering Atlantic bubble

To the Premier again: Is there any room for flexibility at all that would allow the balance to be maintained between the safety of Islanders but allowing these people to see their families when Christmas does arrive?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Mr. Speaker, just to clarify, I'm sorry if I might have confused it but all along, the protocol has been so these individuals who are on a rotational basis or are classified as essential workers actually are able to spend with their families and isolate with their families. That will continue.

The testing component of it is to allow for a little bit more freer movement. Normally, for most who come here, we require a 14-day self-isolation. With our rotational workers, we've been able, through testing and other protocols, to allow them to be with their families. None of that will change. A trucker will still come home, isolate with his family and will be required to do the testing as they have been. Their limited movement around the province is not to include large public gatherings, it's not to be in public outside of their small household, cohort, essentially but they can still safely drive their kids to school, they can do all of those things.

That's why the rules are in place. They're a little stiffer now because we're in the teeth of a second wave and COVID is on the shores all around us and we're trying hard to make sure it doesn't get here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am actually offended and disappointed. This side of the House, we listen to our constituents. We listen to Islanders and we learn from them. We listen and learn with every call that we take and we know that Islanders across this province are in crisis. Whether they are Islanders who are living on the edge of poverty, or in a mental health and addictions, whether they're families or seniors or well off-Island people who've moved here from another country and can't find somewhere to live, or a doctor who wants to move here and has to turn the posting down because he can't find a place to live, or staff members in our office who've moved back here and can't find somewhere to live.

We actually listen, we learn, and we represent. I am proud that my caucus are representing that here today in this House. We are not doom and gloom; we are speaking for the constituents we represent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Listening to constituents re: housing

Ms. Bell: I'd like to ask the Premier: When his minister responsible for IRAC admits that his file is a low priority for him as his primary focus is on education, and that the Minister of Social Development and Housing has a responsibility only for a small part of the housing story for social housing, seniors and families, when we hear from regular Islanders about all of the housing issues they have, who do you suggest that they call if it's not your caucus. Because it sounds like, honestly, they're calling us because you don't want to hear what they have to say. What do you say when they call you, Mr. Premier.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think anyone on this side of the House has denied that there's a challenge with housing. In fact, every answer I've given today I've called it a crisis. I don't think that I've in any way suggested that it isn't. The job that we all have as the elected officials here in

PEI is to try our best to help people. That's what we try to do here.

I think if there's people who are having difficulty, we try very hard to help them. We have programs in place to assist. I'm the first one to say that it isn't perfect. Absolutely, we need to do better. We have made incredible strides when it comes to housing: a mobile voucher to make it more affordable, building a record number of places for people actually to live. I'm not sure what else the hon. member would suggest that we do.

I'm in the job 18 months, we're playing 15 years of catch-up but we're doing incredible things. Is it perfect? Absolutely not, and we're trying really hard. The Capital Budget tomorrow will show our further continued investment in affordable housing and in housing here on Prince Edward Island. All I can do in the job is try my best and that's what we've been doing.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Well, Mr. Speaker, every time we meet and discuss housing we give government advice, they just don't actually do anything with it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

In fact, in November 2019, this House passed the official opposition motion to create a rental registry, a critical source of information for tenants and landlords, and one of only ways to actually enforce rent control.

To remind the members, it resolved that the Legislative Assembly would urge government to establish a searchable, free and public rent registry that includes information on current and past rent, reasons for rent increases, legal orders, and all that landlords would be required to do is file. A year later there has been zero progress and zero activity on this commitment.

Responsibility for rent registry

A question for the Premier: Did you assign responsibility for this to any member of your executive, or was this just another example of all talk, no action?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would be the first to commend the hon. member for being someone who's a good listener and a good collaborator, and that's why I was very open to listening to the conversations we had and actually get to work and jointly come together with the biggest investment in social assistance payments in the history of PEI. I think that's a good thing and I was happy to do it. I give her the full credit for doing it. That's the kind of government we've been trying to lead.

I would suggest that the fingerprints of your caucus, your party over there are all through some of the accomplishments that we have been able to do here collectively as a province. You have been driving this, and that's an important job. I'm the first one to tip my hat to you. I don't care where the ideas come from if we can get good results.

I'm open to all good ideas and none of that will change. I don't know how long I'll be in this job, but as long as I'm here, I'll be open to good ideas. I'm very grateful, quite honestly, that many of them come from the opposition caucus.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere, your final question.

Ms. Bell: Well, Mr. Premier, I would hope that that means that you'll actually get moving on that rental registry. That would be a great start.

Housing insecurity affects everyone, regardless of their income, employment status, where they live in the province, their age, or their gender. As you've heard from my colleagues today, it has a direct impact on mental health and addictions, on recruitment and retention of newcomers, on professionals and youth, seniors and families, and most importantly right now, our economic recovery and growth.

Action needed on housing crisis

Question for the Premier: Isn't it time you admit that the housing crisis needs the attention and action of your entire government, just as you did with COVID?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the questions and for the passion behind them. I think that is how we actually get answers here.

The one thing that I think I can say quite honestly that I learned most about this job from being in it for the last number of months is that the connection that all of these issues have to each other, and they're not mutually exclusive to one another. I think I learned that just through the osmosis, I think, of the job, but also through the economic growth and recovery council.

The cross-pollination of all of these issues and how they're all funneled together. It's incredible how connected they are. I think our success as a province, whether it's from an economy perspective, whether it's from an environmental perspective, or whether it's from a social perspective, is all dependent on people in PEI doing well.

I'm trying my hardest to try to do the best we can so that Islanders can find that level of success, that level of comfort, that level of dignity that they need. It's a big, big job, but I'm trying hard every day and I appreciate the assistance of the colleagues over across, who I know feel the same way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

End of Question Period

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Physician Recruitment

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

It's certainly a pleasure to rise in the House today to announce a new family physician who is coming to Prince Edward Island.

Dr. Peter Entwistle will begin his full-time practice at the Tignish Health Centre in February of 2021. I'm extremely pleased to welcome Dr. Entwistle to the health care team here on PEI. I know residents in the

Tignish area will also be very pleased to welcome him and be under his care. Dr. Entwistle, who joins the Health PEI team, hails from Oliver, British Columbia, has a passion for providing innovative, patient-focused, team-based health care. He is looking forward to the opportunity to work with an environment that embraces true health care principles and values.

I'm also pleased to welcome his wife, Anne, who will join the Tignish Health Centre as an LPN.

When Dr. Entwistle visited PEI last year, he said he kept hearing about the Tignish Health Co-operative and their style of practice. He says: This is an opportunity for he and his wife to work and enjoy life in the community of Tignish. They are both looking forward to moving to the Island in 2021.

In addition to this, a temporary nurse practitioner was hired at the centre in March of 2020, and a permanent, full-time NP position has now been posted.

I'd be remiss if I didn't thank Dr. Declan Fox, former family physician of the centre, and all other physicians and nurse practitioners who had offered locum support, on-site and virtually, while recruitment efforts were underway. I want to give kudos to the team at Recruitment and Retention, Health PEI, and the Tignish Health Centre and their great community for all their work behind the scenes to make this possible.

Recruitment efforts continue and I am so pleased as we continue to see more and more progress in this area.

This week alone, we had four letters of offer signed and another seven are in the final stages of the selection process. Prince Edward Island is a wonderful place to live and work and it is tremendous to see more and more health care professionals choose to call PEI home.

I truly wish I could have made this announcement yesterday, but to the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, happy belated birthday.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And yes, this is certainly welcome news and we welcome this new doctor to Tignish. It's fantastic to hear that.

We've heard quite a bit about new initiatives and efforts to recruit new physicians to PEI, which is wonderful to hear, but I have to note that we've heard very little about what initiatives will be put into place to recruit and retain more nurses to Prince Edward Island.

I want to highlight a few recent examples that show us that we need to take our nursing shortage more seriously.

A lack of nurses has kept the new wing at the PEI seniors home in Wellington closed. The building is open and ready to go but they can't fill those beds because they don't have enough nursing staff.

The nurses union has highlighted that the psychiatric urgent care clinic closure occurred because they didn't have enough nursing staff and that this was a failure to plan and to find innovative ways to make sure we can recruit and retain staff in our mental health services.

The Western Hospital has repeatedly been closed due to nursing shortages.

Just this week, the minister announced two new builds under the new Mental Health Campus, the addition to Lacey House and the day treatment centre, but how will they be any good if we don't have staff to run them? We'll be in the same situation as the seniors home: a nice building but no staff to fill the beds, or to allow us to fill the beds.

Nurses are feeling bounced around and not acknowledged in a tangible way. They are burnt out and we've been in a critical nursing shortage for years. COVID has only made this problem worse and we need to do something now to address it. Nurses across this province need to hear that the minister understands and cares about their needs, their wellbeing and that they are facing the

safety challenges of perpetually understaffed workplaces.

I sincerely hope that the minister will address this critical issue soon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, we've heard the minister congratulate himself many times in this Legislature on his physician recruitment plan and I will admit new hires are positive and I certainly, on behalf of Tignish-Palmer Road, myself, I do congratulate him on that announcement of a new doctor coming to Tignish and I also want to thank Dr. Declan Fox for his service over the years there. Dr. Fox is a doctor I got to know pretty well, he tended to like to go to some of the same establishments for craft beer as I did. It was quite frequent in that regard.

Unfortunately, the minister never announces how many doctors are leaving or how many doctors are retiring. We always get the positive but never want it to be the negative. That's all part of it.

Everyone on this side of the House certainly is hopeful that this is an initiative that will be a success. But I just wanted to mention a few things here: Dr. Fox's patients never actually went on the patient registry; he was still providing some virtual care for them, for these patients and locums were filling in some of the gaps.

Actually, as I checked today, there are 14,400 patients on the patient registry still without a family doctor. This announcement doesn't address any of that today.

I was certainly criticized by that member many times when there was 8,000 on the patient registry and I was embarrassed about that. 14,400 is quite a bit different than that. Certainly, there's lots of people that are falling between the cracks. Some of his recruitment efforts, like that failed pub crawl through Ireland, didn't seem to return any physicians or we haven't heard of any yet and I certainly would say that the minister still has to stop shuffling the deck in health

care. It's great: lose one, you gain one, but we got to start gaining and get some of those 14,400 dealt with.

I do think it's really important to identify that a lot of this is done by our foundations, too.

The Tignish Health Centre certainly did a lot of work in helping with this recruitment plan and I know our foundation in O'Leary does the same in trying to help with recruiting.

I think that's really important but, like I say, existing physician complements don't change the situation just by adding one when you lose one. I just wanted to add that comment.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Oyster Enhancement Fund

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am proud today about a program that was recently delivered in support of the PEI oyster industry.

The Oyster Enhancement Fund was administered by the PEI Shellfish Association, in collaboration with our provincial Department of Fisheries and Communities.

As we all know, COVID-19 has had a huge impact on many industries, including the retail and hospitality sectors, which are typically the main buyers in the PEI oyster market. As a result of this, there were excessive oysters available from oyster growers. Our department saw this as an opportunity to add to our annual oyster enhancement efforts that we conduct each year with the PEI Shellfish Association and to work on an action plan to help sustain the commercial-wide oyster fishery.

Through that plan, more than four million surplus oysters from approximately 56 growers were redistributed into the commercial fished wild oyster beds with the following goals in mind:

To further enhance commercial-wide oyster beds by enhancing the amount of oysters available;

To develop a new oyster bed for future harvest;

To increase the amount of broad stock available at the Bideford river spat collection reserve, an important oyster spat collection area;

To also use some of the oysters in the pilot project to improve the water quality in areas where there are annual water quality issues.

This program was supported by industry and was delivered with the help of the PEI Aquaculture Alliance, the PEI Shellfish Association and industry partners. The program was completed by the end of October.

This is a great example of some of the sustainable and innovative projects taking place to support our seafood and aquaculture industries and to also benefit the environment across Prince Edward Island.

In closing, I'd like to say that while some markets are being hit hard by COVID-19 pandemic and our government is working with Islanders to everything we can to support industries through this difficult time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise in response of this statement.

I think this was a fantastic initiative that primarily took place due to COVID-19 impacting the markets.

This program allowed for the federal and provincial governments to support our oyster growers and aquaculture while also building a sustainable future for the wild oyster fishery. This program provided an opportunity for the aquaculture and wild oyster fishers to collaborate and build relationships, as well.

The shellfish association members were able to give input in what oyster beds would be enhanced. From what I have been told, those opinions were listened to.

I want to also acknowledge the incredible work of Peter Warris and the aquaculture alliance for their on-the-ground support to make this program a reality.

This project even allowed for the seating of a new area in St. Peters Bay that will expand the oyster fishery in the eastern part of the province as well.

I think we are all aware that it is likely the impacts of COVID-19 will continue to have a negative impact on markets in the 2021 season.

I hope the minister will continue to work with the federal government to allow this program to continue and further enhance future opportunities for both our wild and cultured oyster fishers and growers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This was a good initiative but there's more to be done.

The oyster industry is a growing industry in our province. It's one that is vital to the overall performance of the fishing industry. We are very proud of the products that our oyster fishers and producers cultivate here in this province.

With so much uncertainty in our economy, it is my hope that the minister understands exactly what is at risk. The economy is all (Indistinct) slowing and grinding to a halt, it is imperative that this government offer our oyster producers more than lip service. We've seen them do this with other sectors in our economy, notably the tourism and retail operators who have been devastated.

Industry support is more than just platitudes offered from inside the Legislature. It is more than just cutting the cheque. Cutting the cheque, I have to give credit to the federal government. I know that Bobby

Morrissey, up my way, has worked really hard for the oyster fishermen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Perry: Real support requires outside the box and thinking creativity on the parts of government, coupled with a willingness to listen to the industry professionals. I do have to – this is a little bit of a slap I’m giving – but I do have to give kudos to the minister because he is out and about and I see him on the wharves, I see him on the boats and I hear back from the fishers that he’s out speaking to them. I have to give him credit for doing that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier King: (Indistinct)

Mr. Perry: I saw him on a speedboat.

Speaker: Okay, members.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table three written questions. The first one would be requesting correspondence from government on the divestiture of land recently. Also, when the proclamation of the Registered Professional Planners Act will happen, as well as information on the RFP process for climate change risk assessment, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Summerside-South Drive, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from O’Leary-Inverness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a CBC report on October 28th, 2020, where the Health PEI CEO stated nearly 57% of canceled surgeries have been completed in PEI from the backlog of COVID and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from

Charlottetown-West Royalty, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.
The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

Mr. McNeilly: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the provincial’s handling of potential COVID-19 spread in schools, a CBC article dated October 13th and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from O’Leary-Inverness, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table the green infrastructure, the foundation for a strong seafood sector in Atlantic Canada document and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Land, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table the Malpeque Harbour Authority economic impact analysis and new wharf design study, dated March 2020 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Land, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Environment, Water and Climate Change.

Ms. Jameson: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table documents referenced in my Responses to Questions Taken as Notice and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Fisheries and

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Aylward: Sorry, I was going by the order sheet, I thought someone was up before me.

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *Medical Society Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Premier, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Medical Society Act*, Bill No. 77, read a first time.

Speaker: Overview, minister?

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The purpose of this act is to continue the Medical Society of PEI as a corporate entity.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act*, Bill No. 75, read a first time.

Speaker: Overview, minister?

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This act provides a legal framework for the government to carry on a direct, distinct

legal action against certain parties to recover the costs of health care benefits provided in relation to the opioid crisis.

Speaker: Any more government bills?

Motions Other Than Government

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled the *Legislative Assembly Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Legislative Assembly Act*, Bill No. 125, read a first time.

Speaker: Overview, member?

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm introducing this bill on behalf of the Standing Committee on Legislative Management. This bill is intended to modernize the current *Legislative Assembly Act*. It formalizes the administrative and operational practices for the Office of the Legislative Assembly, the Office of the Speaker and the Standing Committee on Legislative Management.

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

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Animal Health Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Third Party, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Animal Health Act*, Bill No. 120, read a first time.

Speaker: Overview, member?

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, this is an act that will amend the *Animal Health Act* to

add sections prohibiting entry to a place in which animals are kept and could result in the exposure of an animal to a disease or a toxic substance that is capable of affecting or contaminating them. It sets out penalties that which would apply to that.

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

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Animal Welfare Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Third Party, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Animal Welfare Act*, Bill No. 124, read a first time.

Speaker: Overview, member?

Mr. Henderson: This is very similar, Mr. Speaker, to the previous act, but this prohibits any person without lawful authority or excuse from entering a building or other enclosed spaces in which commercial animals are being kept and knowing that being reckless as whether entering such a place could result in the release or escape of any commercial animals. It also makes the person who contravenes that act liable for the cost of any damage to those animals.

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

Mr. Howard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Electric Power Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Electric Power Act*, Bill No. 123, read a first time.

Speaker: Overview, member?

Mr. Howard: This bill would amend the *Electric Power Act* to require a public utility

to include estimates of emissions reductions under an energy efficiency and demand-side resources plans submitted to IRAC and it would also require IRAC decisions regarding rates, tolls or charges to promote energy efficiency and demand-side resource measures. Additionally, it would require that decisions relating to residential classes of customers do not give less expensive power to customers that use more energy.

Orders Other Than Government

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, that the 38th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 38, *Down Syndrome Day Act*, Bill No. 119, ordered for second reading.

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

Mr. Perry: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Down Syndrome Day Act*, Bill No. 119, read a second time.

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

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

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (Deagle): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *Down*

Syndrome Day Act. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause or just a general –

Mr. Perry: Can I provide a general overview of the bill's intent?

Chair: Yes.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Chair.

I'm pleased to introduce legislation recognizing Down Syndrome Awareness Day, which is March the 21st of every year.

In 2011, the UN declared March 21st Down Syndrome Awareness Day and called on government, private sector and civil society to observe the day in an appropriate manner. The date, March 21st, was chosen due to the fact that March is the third month of the year which signifies a triplication of the 21st chromosome, hence the reason for the 21st day of March.

Approximately 1 in every 781 babies born in Canada is born with Down syndrome. There's also an estimated 45,000 Canadians with Down syndrome.

This said, I am happy to introduce this legislation. I hope all members will offer their support for recognizing March 21st as Down Syndrome Day here on PEI.

I also have a request to bring a stranger onto the floor.

Chair: We have a request to bring a stranger onto the floor.

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Janet, could you just introduce yourself for Hansard? Could you just speak into the microphone in front of you?

Janet Charchuk: My name is Janet Charchuk and I'm from Alberton.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you very much, Chair.

Welcome, Janet, to the Legislative Assembly on this very important day.

Janet Charchuk: Thanks.

Mr. Gallant: I just have a question for you: What is something you want people to know and understand about yourself?

Janet Charchuk: What do I want people to know about myself?

Well, first of all, I want people to know that I am passionate about my advocacy work and that I do speak up for people who cannot speak up for themselves and that I am a Special Olympics athlete leader and I'm also the Canadian representative for Down Syndrome International.

Mr. Gallant: I just would like to thank you very much for sharing that with us and I'll let someone else ask some questions at this point.

Thank you very much, Janet.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

Mr. Henderson: Janet, I guess I've known you for a long, long time –

Janet Charchuk: What do you think?

Mr. Henderson: I even believe I think you were pretty good friends with one of my cousins there, I'm not sure if you're still in that relationship or not – that would be Paul Phillips, you know Paul Phillips?

Janet Charchuk: Paul Phillips, yeah, he's still my boyfriend.

Mr. Henderson: I guess that's what I was referring to, but from my perspective, I used to work with Janet when I was working with Community Inclusions and you've always been a great advocate for people with Down syndrome and people with intellectual disabilities.

I think it's important to, for the record here and Hansard, this is a pretty prestigious facility, you're here now having the opportunity to speak for people with disabilities and maybe you could speak a little bit about the barriers that you've

overcome as a person, dealing with your issue of Down syndrome.

Janet Charchuk: The barriers, right?

Okay, I believe I have at least two. My first barrier was sports when I was younger, when I was a kid, because you had to be a really good athlete and you had to be very competitive at the time to be on a team. When I joined Special Olympics, I joined in 1996; that changed my life because I was able to play at my skill level and with my friends. That was one of my barriers.

My other barrier was to do with housing. First of all, I did advocate for a place in Alberton, it's called Alberton House, but I was able to get the land rezoned and I helped out with looking for funding. I even talked to the Rotary Club of Summerside to get furniture and things.

I lived there for six years and now I am living on my own and I'm very proud of myself for doing that.

Mr. Henderson: I know you also advocated quite extensively for the O'Leary Lions Club independent housing project there in O'Leary. You didn't choose to live in O'Leary. I'm not sure why that is.

Anyway, I just wanted to thank you for your advocacy on behalf of people with intellectual disabilities on PEI and, really, all across Canada and throughout the world, so thanks for the good work that you do.

Janet Charchuk: You're welcome, Robert.

Chair: Any further –

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West
Royalty.

Mr. McNeilly: Yes, I want to thank you for coming in and talking about your advocacy.

I've heard you're a very good Special Olympian.

Janet Charchuk: I am.

Mr. McNeilly: That's fantastic.

I just wanted to ask: How do you cope with any tough days?

Janet Charchuk: How do I cope with tough days? Well, that is a good question.

I actually know that everyone does have – everybody has their own tough days. I know that. For me, I do like to work out, through yoga, and I also like to talk to people, like to my family and my friends if I had a hard day.

Mr. McNeilly: That's a great answer.

Thank you for coming in today.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Gallant: Thanks again, Janet, and thanks for sharing some of your stories with us.

I'd just like to ask you a question going forward. Is there something that you would like to see or excites you going forward into your future?

Janet Charchuk: What excites me?

I'm thinking once this bill does get passed, I am actually excited for everyone to see our abilities.

Mr. Gallant: Once again, I just want to thank you very, very much. It's quite a nervy time to come in and sit here in front of strangers and it's certainly a welcome to have you here and hear your story and thank you very much.

Janet Charchuk: You're welcome.

Chair: The hon. Member from
Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Chair and thank you for coming in, Janet.

I had the pleasure of attending the ACL conference where you were there talking about housing so it's nice to see you again.

Janet Charchuk: Oh, you were there, right.

Ms. Bernard: I'm just wondering, in your opinion, is there anything that government could be doing to better support Islanders and their families who are living with Down syndrome?

Janet Charchuk: In my opinion, right?

Okay, let me think. I think you guys could use your money to maybe to help with supportive and affordable housing –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Janet Charchuk: – inclusive education in schools and what was the other one – I had a third one.

Mr. Perry: If you think about it after, we can come back to it.

Janet Charchuk: Yeah.

Mr. Perry: Yeah. Okay?

Janet Charchuk: Oh, healthy –

Mr. Perry: Okay.

Janet Charchuk: I said healthy, right?

Mr. Perry: Yes.

Janet Charchuk: Okay. Thanks.

Oh, no, employment – for support of employment, to help with job coaches and stuff like that. So, we can learn to do the job and do it well.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Janet. Those are great.

My last question is: I'm wondering if, in your mind, what sort of special activities would maybe go along with this day?

Janet Charchuk: Special activities?

Ms. Bernard: Yeah, would there be anything special way of celebrating this day that you see?

Janet Charchuk: Oh, for World Down Syndrome Day?

Ms. Bernard: Yeah.

Janet Charchuk: Oh. I'm glad you asked that question. Okay. I think about what we have done before. I know there's this one called Lots of Socks thing –

Mr. Perry: Yes. Yeah.

Janet Charchuk: – that we put on two different coloured – different socks. You guys must have saw it on my Facebook one time. Me and my mom put two different coloured socks on to celebrate World Down Syndrome Day and we took a picture of our feet. It's to show that we all have different abilities.

Ms. Bernard: I really love that answer and I think that everyone in this House, we must remember that and wear two different socks next March 21st.

Janet Charchuk: Yes, on March the 21st, yes. I forget how it goes, but I think it's the third month and there's three copies, right?

Mr. Perry: – of the 21st chromosome –

Janet Charchuk: Yeah, the 21st chromosome, yeah.

Mr. Perry: Yeah.

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Janet, for being here. That's good, Chair.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

Thank you to the member for bringing this forward and thank you, Janet, for coming and speaking.

Janet Charchuk: You're welcome.

Mr. Myers: I guess my question is, from what I understand from today, you do a lot of advocacy work –

Janet Charchuk: I do.

Mr. Myers: – in Down syndrome and I wonder what this day would mean in helping you in your efforts for advocacy.

Mr. Perry: How is proclaiming this day going to help you? So, would it be more like bringing more public awareness?

Janet Charchuk: To bring more public awareness?

Mr. Perry: Yeah, to Down syndrome?

Janet Charchuk: To Down syndrome.

Mr. Perry: Yes.

Janet Charchuk: Yeah.

Mr. Perry: Okay.

Janet Charchuk: Is that it?

Mr. Perry: Yeah.

Janet Charchuk: Okay.

Mr. Perry: Or you can add whatever you want. Yeah. How would this day help you? How (Indistinct) –

Janet Charchuk: To help me to bring awareness.

Mr. Perry: To Down syndrome, so you could talk, maybe, about your position on the international board.

Janet Charchuk: Oh, right, because I am the Canadian representative for Down Syndrome International.

Mr. Perry: Exactly. Yeah.

Janet Charchuk: Oh. This is a tough question.

Mr. Perry: You have lots of time.

Janet Charchuk: Oh, I'm sorry.

Mr. Perry: Just talk about how you advocate for people with Down syndrome.

Janet Charchuk: Oh, yeah. I do advocate for people with Down syndrome. I think it's because I want to see – I advocate for them because I want them to have the best possible life they can get.

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

I want to thank you for coming today and I want to thank the member for bringing this forward. I think it's really important and I do think that this will help in your advocacy. I look forward to next March 21st and see how we'll celebrate on the Island. I think it'll be a big day.

Janet Charchuk: Yeah.

Mr. Myers: That's it for me.

Janet Charchuk: Definitely.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Gallant: Thanks again, Chair.

And thanks again, Janet. I just have a quick question. Do you know a gentleman in Miscouche by the name of Travis Perry? Have you ever met Travis Perry?

Janet Charchuk: Travis Perry? Have I met him?

Mr. Gallant: He's from my community in Miscouche.

Mr. Perry: You'd know him on Facebook.

Janet Charchuk: Oh, I know him on Facebook.

Mr. Perry: Yeah.

Mr. Gallant: You know him on Facebook?

Mr. Perry: Yeah.

Janet Charchuk: Probably, I would likely know to see. I know pictures, names, and faces.

Mr. Gallant: He's a very fine man in our community. He's a volunteer member of the Miscouche Fire Department and he's well-respected. We certainly all enjoy Travis Perry.

Thank you very much for your advocacy for people with Down syndrome.

Thank you for coming in.

Janet Charchuk: You are very welcome. I'm proud to be here, too.

Chair: Do we have any more questions for Janet?

The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

Mr. Hudson: Thank you, Chair.

I want to thank you, Janet, for coming down. I thank the hon. member for bringing this forward. Janet is a constituent of mine in District 26 Alberton-Bloomfield.

First of all, I want to congratulate Janet on all of her accomplishments over the years: athletics, Special Olympics. She has been a real ambassador right across the province; right across the world, really, for the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Again, Janet: congratulations for all of the things that you have done. Let's face it: you've helped to put PEI on the map worldwide and you deserve a tremendous amount of credit for that.

So, thank you.

Janet Charchuk: (Indistinct)

Mr. Hudson: Just one question, Janet –

Janet Charchuk: Sure.

Mr. Hudson: You've traveled extensively for sports, for other events.

Janet Charchuk: Yeah.

Mr. Hudson: If there is one thing that you've taken from those travels, from those experiences, and things that you have seen across the world that you would bring back to PEI and make a suggestion for us here on the Island – if there's one or two things that come to mind, just wondering what they might be.

Janet Charchuk: Oh, okay. From my travels?

Mr. Perry: So, when you're traveling and you're speaking to other people from all across the world –

Janet Charchuk: Yeah, that's correct.

Mr. Perry: – are there any ideas that they give you that you would like to see happen here?

Janet Charchuk: Oh, that's what he means. Okay; not sure.

Mr. Perry: Any of the conversations you've had with other people that may have given

you some idea that, oh, you know, that could work here in PEI.

Janet Charchuk: I'm just trying to think.

Mr. Perry: Yeah. I know one thing: that's you being on the floor today promoting this bill, too.

Janet Charchuk: Oh yeah, that'd be one of the things.

Mr. Perry: Yeah, exactly.

Janet Charchuk: Yeah, me, here, promoting – yeah, me here today, I'm promoting this bill today.

Mr. Perry: Exactly.

Janet Charchuk: Yeah.

Chair: Oh, one more?

The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

Mr. Hudson: Yes, thank you, Chair. I just want to, again, thank Janet for coming and for her answer to my question.

Again, I thank the hon. member for bringing this forward. I personally will be very happy to support this bill.

Thank you.

Janet Charchuk: Awesome.

Chair: All right. (Indistinct) –

Mr. Perry: I have just some short (Indistinct) in closing.

Okay, thank you.

I just want to thank Janet for coming in today. I've known Janet for quite awhile.

Janet Charchuk: Yeah.

Mr. Perry: We've traveled a little bit.

Janet Charchuk: We have, right?

Mr. Perry: I know, and Janet is great for – I think it was 15-16 years ago, we were in Brandon, Manitoba and I was flying back

and you were flying to Ireland to represent Canada.

Janet Charchuk: Oh, that was in Austria.

[Laughter]

Mr. Perry: Oh, was it Austria? I thought it was – we'll argue about that. We'll talk about that one later. I don't know about that one.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Perry: Because you're everywhere, but she's a great advocate for people with Down syndrome.

Janet Charchuk: Oh, yeah. I'm sorry.

Mr. Perry: No, that's fine. So, you fly internationally and you speak with people internationally.

Janet Charchuk: I do.

Mr. Perry: You're a great representative. I'm very, very proud of you –

Janet Charchuk: Thank you.

Mr. Perry: – as are all of us in this room and all Islanders. You also do motivational speaking.

Janet Charchuk: I do.

Mr. Perry: And where did that come from?

Janet Charchuk: Where did that come from?

Mr. Perry: 4-H? You used to be a great member in 4-H.

Janet Charchuk: Yeah, I used to be a great member of 4-H, for sure.

Mr. Perry: Yeah, and then you aged out and you won some competition – some public speaking, also.

Janet Charchuk: Oh, I have. Yeah.

Mr. Perry: Yeah, so I just wanted to throw that in there, too, but Janet's been great for knocking down barriers and for advocacy. Living independently: that's a big, big –

Janet Charchuk: Because I'm pretty passionate to help others.

Mr. Perry: And that's clear to see. So again, I want to thank, not only Janet, but other people from my district who have inspired me, like Rebecca Carragher –

Janet Charchuk: Oh, I know her. Yes.

Mr. Perry: – (Indistinct) Handrahan –

Janet Charchuk: Yeah.

Mr. Perry: – Ivan Arsenault –

Janet Charchuk: Ivan, I know him.

Mr. Perry: – Sarah Shea –

Janet Charchuk: I know her too.

Mr. Perry: And do you know Aiden Wilson?

Janet Charchuk: Not very well.

Mr. Perry: Aiden is very young but he's up and coming. He's going to be an athlete pretty soon. He's going to give everybody a run for their money.

Janet Charchuk: Yeah. That'd be awesome.

Mr. Perry: Okay, great. So, Janet, I want to thank you again for coming in today.

Janet Charchuk: You're welcome.

Mr. Perry: And I want to thank all members for the questions.

Janet Charchuk: They were great questions. Yeah.

Chair: Thanks, Janet.

I think you've probably given better answers than a lot of people that have sat there before, too.

Janet Charchuk: I know, eh?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: And now we get to say: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Janet Charchuk: Awesome.

An Hon. Member: Awesome.

Chair: And shall the preamble carry?
Carried.

Mr. Perry: I move the title.

Chair: *Down Syndrome Day Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Perry: I move the enacting clause.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Perry: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *Down Syndrome Day Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Motions Other Than Government

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I call Motion No. 95.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Motion No. 95.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty moves, seconded by the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness the following motion:

WHEREAS many Islanders have taken a leadership position in the elimination of racial discrimination;

AND WHEREAS inequities still exist;

AND WHEREAS these inequities involve, all elements of society, including justice, housing, education, health care and employment;

AND WHEREAS there is a sincere desire to address these inequities through new legislative and policy approaches in government;

AND WHEREAS government has promised to use a progressive lens in its deliberations to address issues of racial inequity;

AND WHEREAS Cabinet's current decision-making process does not explicitly require a thorough examination of implications relative to racial equity;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge Government to agree to an immediate and full review of its practices relative to its response to racial inequities;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge Government to introduce practical methods to ensure a racially-aware process in terms of legislation, regulation and Cabinet decision-making.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty to start debate.

Mr. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today on this important motion.

Racism is a public health issue on PEI, as noted by Dr. Heather Morrison, our Chief Public Health Officer.

The social determinants of health identify three factors that influence health: race, poverty and culture are among them. Last summer, on June 5th, almost six months ago, a grassroots activity led by the Black Cultural Society walked through the streets of our capital city calling for an end to racism on PEI. It was reported to be the

largest march for racial justice in provincial history.

Shortly after, on June 19th, Indigenous Lives Matter PEI Healing Walk For Justice proudly walked through the streets of Charlottetown.

These public displays are calls for action for our government to step up and deal with racism on PEI. We need to do something, not just because of the marches. We need to take action to combat racism because it's the right thing to do and will benefit all of us.

On June 12th, I had the honour and privilege to present to this Legislative Assembly a petition on behalf of the Black, Indigenous and People of Colour, or the BIPOC community organization calling on government to a complete and extensive review of all provincial legislation and policies and apply a racially focused lens, an immediate focus on education, health care, wellbeing and job security.

At that time, that very day, every one of us in this House stood beside the BIPOC representatives outside the chambers to pledge our support.

The following day, the Premier said: Now is the time for action to make legislation, regulations and policies inclusive for the BIPOC Islanders to make positive change in PEI.

Unfortunately, talking about these things is the easy part. Almost six months have passed and I would ask the question, what action has been taken by our government leaders over that six months? We need positive impacts now. The people are waiting.

Diversity is our strength, but only if the people that march in the streets feel the impact.

I want to tell a story about a family that's here on Prince Edward Island. The father was here for the last three years, he's a professional basketball player, playing for the Island Storm and he had such a great experience in Prince Edward Island, he decided to move his family from California and it's very, very rare to sign a multi-year contract with the basketball program in

Charlottetown. I think he might have been the second player, only, to do that.

Robbie came and he set up roots with his family here. He couldn't afford housing in the city so he moved out to rural Prince Edward Island and they're enjoying where they live, but they face many challenges as a black family coming to Prince Edward Island. He is the type of person that we need more of in Prince Edward Island.

Just recently, we were chatting and we were talking about different ideas about some different plans because, as you know, COVID has affected us in many different ways. It has affected him as a professional athlete. He's adapting, he's moving, he's transitioning to different things. Along the way, we got him excited to talk about what it is he wants to do, be a motivational speaker in school, help kids in school, he wants all play for basketball and he's going to work towards that. He got so excited, he looked at me and he said, he looked and he touched the side of his hair and he said: do I need to do anything with my hair, Gord?

That says more to me than anything, because what he was saying to me is, he can't change the colour of his skin. Am I good enough to fit in and do these things that I'm planning on doing? You can control your hair, but you cannot control your skin colour.

Most recently, his young boy, Robbie Junior in kindergarten, amongst playing with other friends, there is situations that happen as a young black boy in a new world. Anyway, there was some tensions at that level that happened and Robbie reached out to me and we chatted. The situation was defused. The teacher did a great job. The school did a great job. The family did a great job of handling a difficult situation. Everybody got through it. It's a success story about how we deal with that and how Islanders deal with racial issues.

It hurts the family and I went out to see Robbie and little Robbie Junior and he's just like the other boys, he's playing with dinosaurs, he wants to be a (Indistinct) – I can't even say the word but he showed me all his dinosaur collections.

It's these types of struggles that we need to be better at and we're doing a good job in

Prince Edward Island, but we need to trudge forward.

I just want to say, to Robbie and his family because I know they're watching today, your presence on this Island is a gift to us. Thank you.

This family is having – Robbie also said to me this family is having a baby. He looked at me and he said: we're having our baby and that baby will be an Islander. That's what we need more of.

We'd have to listen to the family stories, embrace their experiences and support them. This will teach us how to be better. Most BIPOC people don't have family here. Our Island, our people, we are their family and we must remember that.

I would say to them: this is your home. Our vision is moving from one of equality to equity. The idea of equality is a fantasy of the past, whereas equity, ensuring everyone has what they need, is the way of the future and it's not a fantasy. It's what will make our province great.

Diversity spurs innovation, increases productivity and creates healthy, respectable communities. They see the world through a new perspective and we must embrace that.

Getting ready for this motion, I talked to many residents in my community and I can come out and ask them, point blank, have you been racially discriminated against in Prince Edward Island? Everybody will be happy to know that their answer, primarily, is no. What they do continue to tell me is the stories like Tommy, who I talked to in my district. He came to Prince Edward Island because a friend from his community in Africa came. The problem is that these two gentlemen were from Rwanda and upon talking to Tommy, he shared with me that every single member of his family was killed during the genocide in Rwanda. He only has a grandmother left. He chose PEI to be his home. He's here now.

You would only see somebody at night who is black, wearing a hoodie. I see somebody that I need to learn from and I need to be there for. We need to have deeper conversations with people to make sure that we understand their stories. What he went

on to say is this young man is homesick. He faces depression and anxiety is around the corner. These are some of the issues that we face in our BIPOC populations. We have to do a better job of reaching out with the services, reaching out, going to them and asking what can we do to help.

Our past around BIPOC issues is a struggle and I can think no further than 400 metres away from this building, sit a community called The Bog. If I ask everybody in this Chamber to have more than a five minute conversation about the history of The Bog, we would struggle, because we don't know, we don't understand. If it wasn't for Jim Hornby and the likes of Scott Parsons, we might not know any more than what we do about those areas. That's not good enough. We don't even have as much as a plaque there and it's been six months since 10,000 people gathered there and sent our province a message.

Indigenous issues are on the forefront and I want to say, again, getting ready for this motion, the Member from O'Leary-Inverness and I, we sat down and had an unbelievable conversation about the issues at Lennox Island, where we could talk freely about how we could support and help and where we've gone wrong in the past. We need to keep these dialogues going.

Similar to the petition, we need a comprehensive review of all provincial legislations and policies through the lens of equity for all races, an immediate focus on education. What I mean by this is encouraging growth through diversity training, unconscious bias training and working with both teachers and students to make sure that we understand our history, where we've come from and where we're going as an inclusive community.

Health and wellness, we look at the social determinants of health and, if you look closely at them, BIPOC members fall within a lot of those social determinants of health. I want to have a dialogue with the minister to do better amongst these important areas: job security and individual growth, professional development is lacking, we need more management training and leadership training for our BIPOC community.

Some of the solutions that you think about might be a BIPOC community navigator where, again, we don't talk about those things in the BIPOC community. We need more outreach, we need to go to them to make sure that we understand and, preparing for this, I talked to somebody at the counseling services at UPEI and I asked them what, in general, are some of the issues that BIPOC people face when they come in. She said: anxiety and depression. It's difficult to be away, it's difficult to set up new roots. We need to do better. We are all family.

I want to say to the BIPOC community that this is your Island and change is coming. That's an important message. We need to continue to talk. We have to move forward and move forward at a more rapid rate. I think that we can do it all together.

To quote Barack Obama: in the end, it's not about finding policies that work, it's about forging consensus and fighting cynicism and finding the will to make change.

That's where we are. We have to find it. I think we're all in this together.

This is not an attack on government. It's too big to be attacking back and forth. History is at fault. We have the opportunity to write a new script. Let's write it together.

Now is the time to move forward with action, investments, measurements and show Islanders that this is an important issue. During this, I brought this up in the resolutions, I brought this document up. It's a memorandum to Executive Council and I'll table it afterwards. This document is a document that goes to Cabinet to make all decisions at the highest level of our provincial government. I urge government to look at this document and make sure it's reflective of BIPOC initiatives and issues. That's very important, because if we can make a change at the highest level of Prince Edward Island, that's a great place to start. To change your mind, first start thinking differently and I think we are all on that same page.

We have much work to do, but I'm sure that as I talk to everybody here in the BIPOC community, just understand that we are all working together to make it better. We're

going to get this right and we're going to do it together.
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I may grab the podium if you don't mind, member.

I, too, am honoured to be able to second this particular motion and I certainly look forward to hearing some of the discussion on the motion here today.

From my perspective, I'm really honoured that the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty contacted me and he talked a little earlier about our discussion that we had; whether by chance or what it really was, but he contacted me and he wanted to get a sense of what my thinking was on the motion and some of those things. I don't know it was whether because I've been here a little bit longer, or exactly what, but it just happened to be that, I think about two or three days before that, I had a meeting with Madeline Sark over on Lennox Island and Lennox Island encompasses one of the 10 poles of my district of O'Leary-Inverness. I live right next door, I'm in the community of Lot 11 which is the next-door community and Madeline and I, we go back a ways and she basically had some issues around what my views, as an MLA for the area were, regarding the issue of moderate livelihood, that particular issue within the fishing industry.

So at the time, I guess I was self-isolating because I just had gotten back from my daughter's wedding, so I said I'll drop over and see you whenever I'm out of isolation.

So anyway, over I went to her home and we had a conversation for probably, I don't know, two hours maybe, something like that. As a person who lives next door, represents Indigenous populations, different cultures than what I tend to be used to, we had an engaging conversation on a real issue where I'll say that I thought I had a general understanding of the challenges that other minority people might have within a community; different skin tones, all of those particular issues.

You really don't until you have a real engaging conversation with somebody about that and talk about these issues.

She had said that there was MLAs from other places, texted her and gave her phone calls and stuff, but she really didn't engage and care. They were doing it because they felt they thought they needed to do something of that nature.

From my perspective, it really was enlightening and I really appreciate her for that. From my perspective, I guess, as the MLA that represents the area, I'm certainly honoured that the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty would ask me to second this particular motion.

Certainly we've seen the world has changed a lot; really more recently when we talk about the things that happened recently even here on Prince Edward Island. Last June we had, basically, an opportunity to maybe reexamine our racial awareness here on Prince Edward Island. Our fundamentals on how we look at cultures and how different cultures interact within this province, and how we as communities have to come together as a collective will as Islanders to understand each other's differences and what maybe the paths that we've gotten to get to where we are here today.

We certainly, a lot of this stuff has maybe boiled to the surface when we talk about what happened with George Floyd, which we seem to be seeing down in the US. How law enforcement officers have gotten a dim view of how they do their job. Obviously, some people in some professions don't maybe understand some of the issues where people come from and that has created many protests across the world, especially what you see in the US. And it's calling for an end of racial injustice and demanding that governments take the consideration of minorities into account when making policy decisions and drafting legislation.

Many of PEI here, we're very supportive of the recent protests that were calling on government to change the way they do things, and attended here in June this year. Observers thought it was actually some of the largest demonstrations in Island history. While many may think of racial or cultural inequality in terms of personal interactions

or individual acts of discrimination, in many situations, the struggles minorities experience can be rooted actually in government policy, whether it's health care, education, administration, or justice, or housing.

In June this year, the mover of this particular motion, my colleague from Charlottetown-West Royalty, tabled a petition in the House on behalf of the Black Cultural Society of PEI, which had over 2,000 signatures. The petition called for a review of legislation and policies while applying a racially focused lens.

While government and the Premier spoke certainly in favour of this petition, while we are still awaiting on results or actions that have come from that particular review, we know that Cabinet makes decisions for various reasons. I've sat there; we've certainly made decisions – now we're going to try to focus a lot of decision-making on climate change in this province. In my time, it was very fiscally oriented so we tended to look at a lot of issues from a financial perspective and how it would possible be ways that we could save money, grow our economy and take those moneys and reinvest it back into programs from a social perspective to help Islanders cope with the challenges that they're facing.

But we certainly have never really heard of the concept of governments implementing a racial or cultural lens when it comes to decision-making and policy development in this particular province. While I certainly would never doubt the sincerity of government to say that they will address this particular issue, there are many who feel that the time of commitments and pledges have passed and really, now it's time to put together some concrete action that makes a difference when it comes to issues that affect everyday Islanders lives, especially those that are in minority situations.

That being said, I certainly am calling on government to expedite the review of legislation and policies while applying this racial or cultural lens.

Furthermore, I call on government to be very transparent and publicly release the results of that review so that we can see for

ourselves what has been done on this particular important issue.

I certainly want to wish Cabinet – certainly begin applying this racial and cultural lens to the decision-making process so to ensure that minorities are not discriminated against in laws and policies that government may implement in future. I'm certainly not suggesting the laws are currently developed or any intent to discriminate, simply saying we should examine how these impacts of these decisions could impact upon minorities in our province. The same way we do when it comes to climate change or other financial issues.

I certainly look forward to seeing what government action will be taken on this particular issue, and I certainly look forward to hearing from any members.

But before I cede the chair here, I certainly want to identify a few people in my life that have been very influential and have enlightened me, from a person who comes from Freeland and of Scottish and English and Irish heritage, just to have a better sense of how that all encompass.

The Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty mentioned a few of them already, but Scott Parsons was one of – extremely accomplished musician and everybody knows I tend to be a bit of a fan of the guitar – listening to the guitar, not so much playing it. But I had a good time with Scott. I used to organize the PEI Guitar Festival here in the province and Scott just had recently released a CD and I had contacted him to be the headliner at one of the year's PEI Guitar Festivals. Scott, a very engaging guy, a very talented musician. I still remember him playing, I think it was one of Led Zeppelin's *Over the Hills and Far Away*, at the Tyne Valley Britannia Hall, as a highlight as I recall.

Scott was so behind the scenes, backstage. The guitar festival was always focused around trying to have all calibers of musicians, all genres of guitar music, and Scott would be backstage with some of the younger performers who just maybe played for the first time, and it wasn't anything about his skin, the type of clothes he wore, or his hair or anything like that, it was how he played the guitar; how intense he could

be at it and how he could convey that to these young performers. Many of those young performers that played on that particular stage of that guitar festival might have been playing for the first or second time even in public and have gone on – I think of Peter Cann that was with the Grass Mountain Hobos and how he got his confidence in playing the guitar at the PEI Guitar Festival, but Scott Parsons played a key role in that. I certainly want to thank him in that.

My physician growing up, and well into my adult life Dr. Madigane – Dr. Joyce Madigane was the physician for pretty well all my adult life until she passed away. She came from Rhodesia at that time it was called, Zimbabwe today. As a young boy you'd go in and she'd do whatever she had to do, examine you, all the checkups and all these types of things and once again, you never looked at her about the colour of her skin or anything of that nature. It was how she could deal with the healing powers of her abilities to help me with whatever ailed me, or whatever. A fantastic person, really almost dedicated her complete life to the Tyne Valley area. I'm sure she did pretty well in the community and they respected her so much and there was quite an outpouring of grief when she passed away.

Another person that I remember a lot more growing up was a fellow by the name of John Andrew Francis. His son, actually, is Senator Brian Francis. John Andrew used to be at our place quite a bit. He was a poll captain for my dad, and of course, I'd be 15, 16 years old and John Andrew Francis was a very accomplished boxer and he had a pretty good set of mitts on him, and knuckles. He was in his later years at that time and you'd see – he'd have some arthritis come in – but I was always amazed and fascinated when I'd talk with him and his big fists and things of that nature.

Once again, he'd be coming to see my dad and he'd maybe come a bit early. Once again, dad would get home around maybe 6:30 p.m., something like that, and he might come in about 6:00 p.m. and mom would have him some tea and have a great conversation about some of the issues about Lennox Island and boxing and how he could wrestle around a bit with you and stuff like

that. I always had a great admiration for him.

Madeline Sark, that I just mentioned, Madeline and I really became more accomplished more recently when she became elected to the Lennox Island Band Council and, once again, we communicate quite a bit. A fantastic lady, great advocate for her community and she is just a fantastic advocate for issues around cultural sensitivity and economic growth in her community. I see great things coming from her.

The final person I want to mention is actually the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty. I had the opportunity to sit next to him in this Legislature under the previous sitting. COVID has separated us a little bit more. I sometimes refer to him as my underling. We're trying to bring him along here as an accomplished legislator in this province and he certainly seems to be embracing the position.

I was quite honoured, I had asked him actually to be the guest speaker at my fundraising dinner here a few weeks ago and he came up, did a great job and I guess the other thing was that I had constituents actually come over and had mentioned he was one of the best speakers we've had here. He really knows what he's talking about and he talked a little bit about bringing some of the issues of this motion that he was bringing forward and explained it out to the constituents in my particular riding. For that, I thank you very much.

For that, I'm quite honoured to second this particular motion and I look forward to future comments from other members of this Legislature.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm proud to support this motion and I want to thank the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty for bringing it forward.

Dr. Morrison has declared racism as a public health issue. Racialized communities often

experience worse health outcomes. For example, we know that across the world, COVID has had greater impacts on racialized communities.

I want to take this opportunity to highlight recent concerns raised by the UPEI Student Union and international students about a policy change related to PEI Health Cards. When I read this motion, it made me reflect back on this issue that I had just read recently in the news and probably many of us read it.

These policy changes by Health PEI have made it more cumbersome for international students to get a health card. International students now have to apply annually, so every year, to keep their health card rather than tying the life of the health card to the study permit that they are here under. It makes it very difficult. We have to note that a significant number of international students are racialized, meaning this change disproportionately harms racialized students.

The change in policy, as reported by the CBC, is contributing also to longer delays in getting health cards out to all Islanders. We're not only harming international students with this policy, we are harming everyone seeking to get a health card.

There's a principle in equity work that policies and programs that are good for marginalized communities are good for everyone. This is exactly why bringing in diverse perspectives is important. It's not just a nice thing to say, it's an effective approach to improving public policy outcomes and I look forward to making sure that this government is taking into account diverse approaches and racially aware approaches as we move forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

It's a pleasure for me to rise to speak to this motion and I would give great props to my colleague across from Charlottetown-West Royalty and those who spoke to this for bringing it forward.

I had a meeting in early September with the Black Cultural Society of PEI, their executive and I started that meeting – the Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture was there. I, quite honestly, said how challenging it is or at least how I felt, for me, to be speaking to this as a white, middle-aged heterosexual male and how I feel a little bit cautious, I guess, to actually broach these topics that need to be broached. It's not that I feel uncomfortable, I think there's just so much unknown around it for me. When I talked with Tamara Steele and those, the fact that the Premier of PEI feels that, that tells me that others across Prince Edward Island feel that to some degree. That's a great indicator of why we need to continue to move forward in this regard.

Tamara did say to me, she said it doesn't matter the colour of your skin, you're in a position to help to drive this forward and I would much prefer to judge you on how you move this forward as opposed to how you feel about us addressing this with you. It was a good conversation, it was a fulsome conversation and I tried to indicate there, as I have in the past, that we're there to help and we have, and I will outline a couple of initiatives that we have responded to quickly in a few moments.

I would just want to reflect a little bit. There are two defining moments within my own life, personally, where this has become – the world has opened to me or I have opened my eyes to the world. You only have to look at the last number of years, 20 years, and how the face of Prince Edward Island has changed through our population increase and growth. The diversity that it has brought has not just made our province bigger, it has not just made our province more economically strong or socially strong, I think it has made us better and I think anyone in Prince Edward Island would reflect that. I think that's a great success story, initially, that we have seen that growth.

When our oldest son, Jake, was about four, we lived in Sherbrooke at the time and we took him to Rainbow Early Childhood Centre on Duke Street; I'll never forget. We walked in and there was a new, young student there, I'd say about the same age as Jake that day. Beautiful, she had a lovely pink dress on, I can picture it yet. She was

black. Our Jake, who is probably the most kind, loving person you could ever meet, walked over to her, looked up and down, reached over and touched her on the cheek.

Once he realized that she was the same as he was, they hit it off and were kind of boyfriend and girlfriend for about six months in the Rainbow Early Childhood Centre. It taught me that what he saw visually and what he felt immediately afterwards, just upon his own investigation, upon wanting to learn, wanting to understand, it showed me that the colour of our skin shouldn't determine how we're treated. It shouldn't determine anything other than how proud we are of our own heritage.

The other defining moment was when I worked for the Mi'kmaq Confederacy. This was around the – events were leading up to 2014, which was the 150th celebration of the Charlottetown Conference. One of the proposals that had come forward that the confederacy, through the department of communications at the time that I was in charge of, was the federal government had talked, at that time, about wanting to reenact the arrival of the Fathers of Confederation. At that time, in 1864, that was a male, Christian, white arrival. You could imagine me, in a room with many prominent Mi'kmaq elders and women and Julie Pellissier-Lush, who is now our poet laureate, said: The plaque in the Legislature says we build it better than we knew. Why don't we focus on what they built as opposed to reliving what they did?

I thought that was amazingly brilliant and probably important with this resolution. It's easy to look back and pick out all of the mistakes that we have made until today. It would be catastrophic for all of us to continue to make those mistakes going forward. That is why we have committed to trying to change the way we do things as a government. To put a gender lens is important, to put a diversity lens, to put an environmental lens on all of these issues are so critically important to how the success of this country, this province will grow going forward.

The immediate response from a lot of people who have been around government for a long time tends to always be that it makes it

a little bit harder to get things done. It's only harder because it's different and I think if we continue to make it the practice of this is how we do these things every day, then it's no longer hard. It actually just becomes part of the day-to-day operations of how we do things. That is where we need to get to. I think we've made some initial strides here.

I also talked to Tamara about a plaque at The Bog, but I honestly said I don't want to be a white male Premier telling you what you should put at The Bog. But we have committed to providing some funding and whatever assistance we need for the community to come together to present some kind of proper – whether it's a monument, a statue, a plaque, or a combination of all of those things, and we have committed to actually providing the funding to get that done, but I think it needs to come from the Black Cultural Society of PEI, from that community, from those people whose ancestors were – lived there. That is what we've committed to in terms of that.

We've also committed to operational funding for the Black Cultural Society of PEI. For the fiscal year we're in now, we've committed 35,000 and then we'll commit a further 41,000 in lieu of office space, which is important. The society really wants to get a foothold in and they feel that leadership role that they can provide, that assistance they can provide to government, will be invaluable as we move forward.

Also, we have put together – and I articulated this, hon. member, in a letter to you. You had written me a letter and it's on its way to you. It's probably on your desk and I'm sorry it's taken – it's dated November 18th but I'll change the date to 19th in case you didn't get it until today.

We also talk about – we're in the process of finalizing a position that will work within Executive Council that will assume the title of anti-racism policy consultant. What I asked the executive of the Black Cultural Society of PEI to do was: Why don't you help us develop the job description? I know what we need to do from a government perspective, but tell me what we need to do from your perspective so we can come up with something that actually works. So, that's something that I'm really excited

about as well. That position will have a direct line – it will be at the senior levels of Executive Council – the direct line within all departments.

We also talked about the formulation of an anti-racism table. So, we're finalizing the terms of reference with the Black Cultural Society of PEI. It's an initial first start but it is just that. I think we need to continue to push ourselves in here to do better. Although we have some conversations during Question Period, I know the opposition members in this House are the same as the government members of this house and when you push government to do things that need to be done, Islanders win in the end. That's the job we have in here.

We talk about it a million times. Whoever gets the credit for it, I don't think it matters to Islanders. If we can leave this place a little bit better than we found it, then I think we could all take a little bit of a bow and that's the job we have here. I just want to continue to remain committed to working with all of my colleagues, all of those across Prince Edward Island, to do what we can to make this province the best place to live, work, and raise a family.

I congratulate the hon. member for a wonderful resolution, and keep up the good work.

Speaker: Hon. Premier, are you adjourning debate?

Premier King: Am I?

Unidentified Voice: Yes.

Premier King: Mr. Speaker, I am adjourning debate.

Speaker: Hon. members, debate has been adjourned.

Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call Motion No. 101 be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Motion No. 101.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford, the following motion:

WHEREAS housing availability and affordability is a critical part of provincial economic strength, growth and recovery;

AND WHEREAS the PEI Consumer Price Index for September 2020 shows that rental costs have increased 12.1% year-over-year;

AND WHEREAS house purchase prices have doubled in the last 5 years, and increased 20% in the most recent year;

AND WHEREAS mobile rental vouchers are a band-aid solution to unaffordability and do not increase housing capacity;

AND WHEREAS unregulated short-term rentals have adversely affected the rental and housing market, especially for low- and middle-income tenants, first-time home buyers and young families;

AND WHEREAS the province has experienced the exceptionally low vacancy rates for the past three years;

AND WHEREAS unavailability of housing makes it more difficult to recruit skilled workers to PEI including newcomers and health care professionals;

AND WHEREAS rising housing costs reduce Islanders' disposable income, and consequently their ability to participate fully in the economy;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge government to make significant immediate and long-term investment in public housing—including cooperatives, supportive housing, seniors and family housing—through all available opportunities and partnerships;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge government to take all possible steps to improve and enforce municipal and provincial short-term rental regulations and return housing stock to the long-term market;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge government to consider taxation policy measures to cool down the housing market;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge government to promote better collaboration and communication between the Department of Social Development and Housing and the Department of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture to ensure that housing is addressed in a holistic way;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge government to implement and report on clearer performance indicators for the PEI Housing Action Plan and housing initiatives generally.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere to start debate.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to this motion. Obviously, it's a comprehensive one that addresses a range of issues and I am not the only member who is able to or willing to speak to this from this side of the House. However, I would like to begin with an overview of some of the key facts that really matter when we come to speaking about the housing crisis here in PEI.

The opening clause for this motion speaks about housing availability and affordability as a critical part of the provincial economic strength, growth, and recovery. As we spoke about this morning, this is not a new crisis. It is a result of a number of complex factors that have occurred over a number of years and are as much a result of inaction as action. Therefore, the responses and the actions that we need to take as government are also complex, but they do not get any easier the longer we leave them.

This crisis is a result of: a rapid population increase; slow and expensive construction builds; upticks in long-term rentals being switched to short-term Airbnbs; job precarity, both pre- and post-COVID; low wages; low vacancy rates; and minimal incentives or intervention from either the Province or municipalities to provide legislation that supports tenants as well as

landlords. We are now in the unenviable position of being comparable in rental rates to large municipalities like Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal. We are also the lowest vacancy rate for the third year running in the country, comparable to spaces, again, like Toronto, Vancouver, and even the north.

Our prices for rentals are some of the highest in the country and we are no longer the low cost-of-living destination of choice. Those Atlantic Lottery ads that used to say what can you do with \$1 million – in Toronto, you could buy a condo with a little platform and have a potted plant on it, but here, you could buy the whole estate. Well, those two things are getting a little bit closer together and I don't know if that's necessarily what we all thought we were signing up for.

The government, both previous and current, were reluctant and have been reluctant to even acknowledge or let alone act on the housing crisis. It's important that we use words that actually reflect the reality. When we talk about those core housing needs, these are not things that only apply to people who are poor. We over-emphasize the need and the gap, not because it doesn't matter – it absolutely does, but there seems to be a very strong narrative that this only sits in one space. This only sits in people who are the lowest income, who are on social assistance, who are unable to change their circumstances, who don't seem to be able to pull themselves up by their bootstraps.

But this is actually impacting everybody. This is impacting regular working families. This is impacting people who are sitting in this House. This is impacting people that we know. It's impacting our communities. It's impacting our parents. It's impacting the people who thought that they were going to be okay when they grew up and they could afford to buy a house or are having to change and shift their circumstances as their parents need to downsize homes or who are having to deal with what happens when you go to think that you want to move to a bigger home and you find that you can't because there isn't one that you can afford.

In my own area, in Parkdale, in what's one of the older subdivisions in Charlottetown, regular ranchers that previously went on the

market for about \$150,000 a year, which is an affordable mortgage rate for a new family starting out, are now tipping the market at just under \$300,000. Some of them are going for more than that and they're going in less than four days. Actually, for a regular family earning a regular wage, they cannot actually get a mortgage for that amount. They are out of the housing market before they've even started.

This is something that, despite some of what we hear from the other side of the House, we're not actually making it up. Islanders aren't making this up.

In fact, it reminds me of when I first came to this House, I had quite a few spicy exchanges with the then minister of what was family services and, in the fall of 2018, that minister actually had to make a formal apology for calling me a liar in the House because I talked about the homeless people that I was meeting with who were sleeping in tents. He might remember it. It was quite a shouty day.

I would go out in the morning and go and visit the tent encampment where people – at this point, this was November, it was snowing and I would drop off supplies: socks, warm clothes, food and check in with people, make sure they were connecting with their support workers. Then, I came into the House and I talked about it in here.

I recognize that not everybody maybe does that on a daily basis. I get that we don't all move in the same circles but the fact that the government at that time and the representative for housing at that time, in government, was so unable to accept that that was actually a reality for Islanders was, in itself, a shock.

I'm happy to say that eventually we got past that and within a few weeks or even a few days, we were able to see the establishment of temporary emergency housing shelters. In fact, that's the first time that the government rented motel rooms to put people up in the winter. That probably saved somebody's life.

We do not want to be the kind of place that makes the news because somebody who is homeless or housing insecure has frozen to death on their way from one shelter to

another. That's the kind of reality that we're talking about in here and it's really hard for people who come from a space of privilege like we do, and we can get in a car and go home and get in a house and have a warm bed to sleep in, it's really hard, sometimes, for us to recognize that that is also the reality of life in PEI.

Those two spaces are getting closer and closer together. Now, we have families who are unable to find affordable, consistent housing. They're kicked out of the housing that they're in, in April, to make way for summer tenants and they go and spend the summer camping in an RV or tents and hope to God that they're going to be able to find an apartment again in the fall so they can put their kids back in school.

In fact, I've had families who have contacted our office and told us that they are sending their kids to school, they're having to lie about where they're living because they're hoping that they're going to get an apartment before it snows or anybody finds out that they're actually in Cavendish.

The stories that we hear consistently from Islanders are not just the stories of people who have never had a job, who are relying on rent supplements, who are these imaginary people who live on welfare and never do anything else. These are the stories of families who do not have an extra \$10 in their pocket; it's the more month than money. When your rent goes up from \$800 a month to \$1,200 a month, you have to take that money from somewhere. You take it from the food that you buy from your family, from the clothes that you buy for your kids, from the gas that you can put in the car, from the heat that you can afford, from the basic things that we take for granted. This is the reality of the housing crisis in PEI. It's shameful. It's embarrassing for the people who are in it and it's shameful for us, as legislators, that we have such a hard time acknowledging and talking about this.

We are getting these calls – I know that everyone in this House is getting them. If you're not listening to them, then you are not listening.

I am really hoping that, after a challenging conversation like we've had today and in

previous days, that we can move past that and to the point where we start talking about the actions that we're going to take, as a collective, as a group, to actually address housing across the continuum for all Islanders.

Mr. Deagle: Call the hour.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'll adjourn debate.

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

We'll recess until 7:00 p.m. this evening.

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: How was everyone's evening? Good.

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness that the 14th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 14, *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act*, Bill No. 66, in committee.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road 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 intituled *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act*. A request has been made to bring a stranger onto the floor.

Shall it be granted? Granted.

Good evening. Would you please state your name and title for Hansard, please?

Christine MacKinnon: Christine MacKinnon, Director of Municipal Affairs, Department of Fisheries and Communities.

Chair: Thank you very much, Christine.

Hon. members, I'm reading the bill section by section. Section 11 has been read and it is still open for questions.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks, Chair.

Welcome back, Christine. Nice to see you. Hi, minister.

We were having a discussion about the amendments that you're bringing forward, minister, and the affect that that's going to have on smaller municipalities. I'm wondering what sort of consultation process you did with those smaller municipalities to come to these amendments.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

During 2020 or this last year, the last 14 months, I've met with all municipalities across the whole Island, individually, by CAO or a combination of councillors and the mayor or the CAO. We had several conversations repeat. A prime example would be the community of Montrose, Wellington; also I'm trying to think of the one that Mr. Jason Woodbury is the mayor of

Christine MacKinnon: St. Nicholas.

Mr. Fox: Yes, St. Nicholas.

Many conversations with the capital mayors repeatedly, with councillors in the City of Summerside, basically anybody that wanted a second consultation or a second conversation on the proposals, we met with them. We did receive 15 submissions – 15

submissions were received from 11 of the 59 municipalities actually gave us written submissions that we consulted with.

Specifically, we also have the rural municipality of Lot 11, North Shore, Victoria, Saint Felix, Union Road. Submissions were also received from local lawyers who work with municipal clients, as well as the federation of municipalities. Everyone who submitted proposals, they were all forwarded to the municipal affairs to look at and talk about.

There was some further things that they would like to see changed. We said that we would research them and bring them back for possible changes in the spring session coming up. We explained that this is a working document and I want to make sure that everybody has a chance to, if we're changing something or they think it would be a good change going forward, that we have them conversations with them, hon. member.

Leader of the Opposition: That's great.

You met with all 59 municipalities –

Mr. Fox: Well, actually, at the time it was 63 and then when the West River Group combined, it actually dropped down to 59.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm really happy to hear that.

During the process, when the MGA was being developed and drafted and also while it was being debated on the floor here a few years ago and since, I've had ongoing communications with the various municipalities in my district, District 17, as you say, that number has reduced since the West River Group amalgamated.

The general feel that I get is people are still confused and they're still – they don't have a good sense of what the MGA is trying to accomplish. There are a lot of people, both within municipalities and who live in unincorporated areas, who are unsure – maybe they'll be even more unsure now because, in a sense, we're backtracking on some of the commitments that were made in the original MGA. I'm just wondering, minister, what your vision of the future of

municipal governance is on Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Fox: That's a really good question, hon. member.

The biggest thing I've learned would be talking from municipalities, especially the small little ones, and I've assured them that we want to be able to keep their identity and their distinctiveness across the Island. I've heard that hands down that a little community, they have pride in their little area and what representation they provide to the province and the federation of municipalities. One thing I've had talks with the federation is I want them to do more outreach with the small municipalities that might not actually belong to the federation and they're doing that.

One thing we've done, and I've been striving for, is to improve the relationships between neighbouring municipalities and the federation and our department. I know our department, the division is working very closely with these smaller municipalities.

I don't want to see anybody lose their identity because they're all distinct and I think they all have something to offer. Some municipalities have very limited capability or capacity in what services they actually provide and some don't provide any whatsoever.

Some of them are based on history and they're very proud of that little area that they represent. I don't want to lose that. That's my vision, is to ensure that these small municipalities keep that vision or that history that they've had over the number of years and we can preserve that.

The only thing I would add to that would be, while providing a uniform sense of governance across the Island, that protects them also.

Leader of the Opposition: And therein lies the tricky job.

You've got a difficult thing to do here, minister, and I appreciate that, because we're dealing with municipalities of different scale, different scope, different capacities, different abilities to govern themselves.

We have a number of reports that have been issued over the years; the most recent and perhaps the most cogent one on municipality governance, or local governance, was the *New Foundations* report – Thompson report, as we know it. There were some very clear recommendations in that Thompson report about what he suggested municipal governments would look like and one of the – I'll see if I can find it. I think I've got it here. His 38th recommendation is this: That the provincial government, through a process of public information and consultation – and you've clearly done a lot of consultation – determine the consensus of Islanders in relation to the incorporation – on and on.

I'm wondering, because I haven't found the consensus in my District 17, and I'm wondering – you're far more traveled and you've spoken to more municipalities than I have, but I'm wondering if you have a sense of whether there is a consensus among Islanders as to what local governance should look like on PEI.

Mr. Fox: That's a good point.

They all agree that governance across the Island needs to be uniform; that some municipalities, you know, they feel like we're happy the way we are, we don't want to change, we don't want to grow or change the services they provide to their area. And I respect that.

I think one thing I'm very pleased with is I've been saying to them: Where do you see yourself in five years or ten years? I guess if I had an underlying message from the municipalities, it would be how they want to protect their identity and I really get that. I think each one is very distinct, as I've said.

It is a balancing act, hon. member. It is, because you have – right now, we have 59 mayors and we have over 400 and some councillors. They've each got their own little personality and what their vision is, so it is quite a role.

Leader of the Opposition: I appreciate what you said. A couple of times – in fact, more than a couple of times now, you've mentioned about the autonomy and the identity of smaller communities. I agree with you.

I live in rural PEI. I live in a very small community of Hampton, which is currently in an unincorporated area and I'll get to some questions on that shortly, but I'm wondering whether you – and I get a sense from what you've said. You're inferring that a smaller community such as Bonshaw, for example, which is involved in the West River amalgamation, which just went through – whether you feel, in doing that, there's a risk that they will lose their – there is a very distinct community sense about Bonshaw. I'm just using that as an example, minister, but reading between the lines of what you said, I get the sense that you fear that they could lose their identity in entering into this amalgamated municipality.

Mr. Fox: No, I don't think they can. I look at them as suburbs, hon. member.

Leader of the Opposition: Pardon me?

Mr. Fox: I look at them almost as like suburbs. Like, you look at Sherwood and Parkdale; they haven't lost their identity. They're still the area of Sherwood within a city or the area of Parkdale. If you go up into Borden-Carleton, they still call – they're very distinct. They'll still say Carleton when it comes to out in Dickie Road, in that area, right?

Mr. Aylward: Carleton Siding?

Mr. Fox: Carleton Siding, yeah.

I'm not worried about them losing their identity, but I respect and understand that they want to keep their identity. I think that's very important to preserve history and that part of it. So, I don't want to see them lose their identity as – now that we have West River, for example, but we still have Bonshaw, right?

Mr. Aylward: Chair?

Chair: Okay, I have an intervention from the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Aylward: Thanks very much, Chair.

Just, I find the conversation and the dialogue quite interesting because the community that I reside in Stratford, back a number of years – quite a few numbers ago, it was amalgamated into the larger community

from various smaller communities: Southport, Bunbury, Crossroads, and the list goes on. But what we've been able to accomplish in our community is celebrate that history, celebrate that past, by embracing it and sharing it.

I couldn't think of living in a community better. I still have friends that grew up in Southport and if you ask them where they're from, even though they live in Stratford, they say: Oh, I'm from Southport.

Similarly, I grew up in Sherwood, which is now part of Charlottetown, but I would still say Sherwood, just as I would say, I'll meet you down by the Towers Road. So, I think we still have that ability as a community to collectively celebrate our history and heritage.

I just wanted to throw that in.

Chair: Okay, thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks. I do appreciate that intervention and a couple things that you said, Minister of Health and Wellness, and also, the minister on the promoter of this bill, was that there was somehow a fear that you will lose your identity if you become part of a larger entity and both of you are saying, actually, I don't think that's the case.

So, given that that was your number one concern about amalgamation – and you're now sort of contradicting yourself by saying, actually, you don't think that's an issue – what other issues do you feel are creating problems for people with the thought of amalgamating into larger municipalities?

Mr. Fox: Well, first of all, I never talked about amalgamation or annexation. I don't think that, from what I'm hearing from municipalities that I've had discussions with is – to be honest, they're not even talking to me about that. They're not even bringing it up. They're talking about wanting to enhance their communities and how to grow them. I'm hearing that hands down across the Island. We're making sure that these municipalities know what funding agreements are available through the rural development agency and also the economic

development agency – the Crown corporation. Some municipalities didn't even know that they could an EDA worker for the summer and have somebody doing little odd jobs around the community or beautification projects and stuff like that. I think we've expanded on the capacity by letting them know what is available. I think it's very proud to drive around the Island – I find it is – to see the signs up that say: welcome to the community of such and such or you're now entering these little places.

The message I have been giving is I want to grow their identity and embrace who they are and what they have to offer the Island. Every one of them has got a little distinct thing: like Victoria is very distinct compared to Crapaud.

Leader of the Opposition: You got that right.

Mr. Fox: You know? And I think that's great. I think one thing I've been saying to them is: How can we show off your small little community where you live and embrace what it was and what it can be in the future and keep on trying to promote that?

Leader of the Opposition: Why do you think, minister, it's taken 30 years and several reports to get to the point where we're still unable to move forward with municipal governance at a sort of level where it is large enough to actually provide the services at a local level that all of the reports suggest we need to do?

Mr. Fox: Fear of change. You know that yourself, you know? The fear of the unknown. I guess I'd have to quote *Star Trek: A New Beginning*.

An Hon. Member: Oh, wow.

Mr. Fox: Right?

Mr. Aylward: That's an answer. (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: We're –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: There it is.

Mr. Fox: There it is.

Mr. Myers: Swapped out.

An Hon. Member: Next?

Mr. Fox: You know, a thing that – I remember back in 1994, when the amalgamation talks between Summerside and Linkletter and St. Eleanor's and that area, right? I remember that and I remember very distinctly that Borden and Carleton didn't want to join. What was there to offer? They were scared. I think the two communities, when they came together by themselves and they joined that common boundary – I think they've done really well. When I explored the idea of saying you can share a service with a neighbouring community or with another area, they like – what's that? And then you explain it to them and, well, they're – you mean I can still keep my identity, but I don't have to lose it or join it with somebody else? To be honest, hon. member, they're excited about it. It's an option so that they can still keep that little sign saying that they are the municipality of Saint Felix or Souris east would be a prime example – what's that, Christine?

Christine MacKinnon: West. Souris West.

Mr. Fox: Yeah, Souris West. Wrong side of the map there, I was looking the other way.

Souris West, there's a prime example there and they were talking about joining Souris and they decided no, we're not going be swallowed up and we can still keep our identity.

Leader of the Opposition: This is an interesting discussion and I realize I'm dominating the –

Chair: Exactly but it's such an interesting conversation and good questions, good answers but I'm allowing it to go.

Leader of the Opposition: I appreciate that, because these are related to the *Municipal Government Act*.

Some of them, there is no particular section that they refer to because it's regarding unincorporated areas and the act is silent on that but I think it's something that Islanders want to hear, where the minister stands on this, so I appreciate you allowing this to go.

Chair: Absolutely no problem. You have the floor.

Leader of the Opposition: As an individual and a member of the Green Party, I'm torn when it comes to local governance because a couple of the founding values and the things that direct how we behave and where we bring our policies from are participatory democracy and self determination which is all about allowing people to decide for themselves how they should be governed, and local self determination would suggest that that should be done at the most local level possible.

In order to develop municipalities here that are large enough to actually provide and maintain the services that people want and need in rural areas, there's a certain threshold that needs to be there. I know Christine has talked about this, that the MGA is not really – it wasn't intended to fit the existing municipalities; rather it was to reform the framework of municipal governments so that we would have robust municipalities that would have the capacity and the capability of providing those services.

I'm torn, even though I refer to the values that my party uses when we come to policy positions on anything, and I'm wondering what values and philosophy you come from when you're trying to decide what the municipal governance structure should look like on PEI.

Mr. Fox: Well, I think that all municipalities – there's basic things that all municipalities must provide and they all have a basic responsibility. All governments have that.

Leader of the Opposition: Minister, a little while ago you said that some municipalities, however, provide no services. How do you square those two statements?

Mr. Fox: That's a good point. We're actually having conversations. Is there another way that we could ensure that organization or that group outside of being a municipality? That's actually conversations that they've brought up to me. Is it some municipalities – the only thing they do is they provide an in and out for fire dues.

They have no capacity whatsoever. They don't provide any services whatsoever.

We have municipalities, they require that they have to look – the power and the authority that goes with that and how that exists for the future of municipalities, the needs of that municipality would be one thing. There is municipalities that they have different needs compared to another municipality. So give them the power to identify those different needs that they provide or the different services they want to provide to their residents, I think is a way.

They have the power or the authority to provide effective management to their residents and I think that we must recognize that, as a government, so that they can make the determination or the decisions that best effect the group of residents that they represent.

Leader of the Opposition: We've talked a little bit about West River, in my district, and how relatively smooth that transition was from five independent municipalities to one combined municipality – not without its turbulent moments, I should say, but made easier by the fact that they were already all existing municipalities and they were contiguous, they were all joined together.

That wasn't the case in Three Rivers at all. There was a lot of concern out there, particularly from the areas that were unincorporated and found themselves, literally, in the middle of this new municipality, made up largely of incorporated municipalities. There was a lot of concern amongst the citizens of that area as to whether their voices were being heard adequately at the table, and the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy was very active in bringing those concerns to the fore.

First question is: Are there any other active talks, at the moment across the province that you're aware of, of further amalgamation?

Mr. Fox: There is an application that was submitted by the Town of Kensington. That is before IRAC right now. That's the only one that I've been made aware of. That's the only application that I've received to forward to IRAC.

There is no other talks across the Island. The only talks that I know of that are ongoing is the talking of shared services or how municipalities can share with another area.

I'll let you know that last night, I had a meeting with the Central Development Corporation and it was on a completely different topic and at the end of the night, the CAO informed me – or one of the board members, I should say, informed me that they see an opportunity for them to be some kind of broker or an organization that could provide some services to municipalities. They have been reached out – municipalities have actually reached out to them and talked to them about that.

Leader of the Opposition: Interesting you bring up CDC in Bedeque, of course, which is one of the areas where there was a real hotspot of concern, of O'Leary and Three Rivers being the other two, in my mind, that have expressed the most vociferous concern about what may happen if amalgamation happens and they live in an unincorporated area that is going to be included in that.

There is nothing in the MGA, there are no provisions whatsoever in there for areas that are unincorporated that could be either annexed or included in a new amalgamated community.

What, as a minister, would you do if a future amalgamation came forward that did include unincorporated areas, as happened in Three Rivers?

Mr. Fox: A prime example would be the Town of Kensington. When they came and met with me over that, I informed them right point blank that if you're having any thoughts of annexing in any area of an unincorporated area, you will have conversations and consultation with the people being affected.

On the Kensington submission, they did go out to the community and the amalgamated area and directly asked for submissions, either for or against, or any comments there about.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm pleased that happened. I realize this is still underway, as you said.

Consultations happened and opportunity for people who live in unincorporated areas was provided for feedback. How are you going to determine whether the feedback you receive from those unincorporated areas is representative of all of the people who live in that area?

Mr. Fox: I think one thing we've been very successful with doing, hon. member, is I remember when the original MGA was brought on the floor of the House. I remember the votes; I remember who voted for what in the MGA.

I think the position this administration has taken and my department is taking is that I want to see consultation with any part of the MGA and how that affects anybody. I think that's very important. I stand by that, I think that if any municipality or any resident in PEI is being – if there's any type of conversation going on, then it's my responsibility to ensure that all people that are affected, or could be affected, are consulted with and I will do that.

Leader of the Opposition: I think the previous administration would say, quite clearly, that there was consultation involved in the Three Rivers process and, yet, a lot of people were distinctly and deeply unhappy at the end of that.

Consultation in itself is not enough. You have to have some sort of process to make sure that the voices of those people who are involved in an amalgamation process and, yet, are not part of a municipality are heard in a truly representative way. How are you going to do that?

Mr. Myers: Change of tone for you.

Leader of the Opposition: Not at all. This has been completely consistent.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) video saying –

Chair: Hon. members, the Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: All I can tell you is I'm not going to speculate on any area or the outcome of any area that wants to put an application before my desk.

My direction and my promise is that I will ensure that there is consultation that will take place between any area or any resident that an application is received (Indistinct)

Leader of the Opposition: Is there any minimum – the MGA requires a minimum population size and tax base or suggests, I should say – do you have any minimum in mind for the ongoing, perpetual, I should say, existence of municipalities that are in place right now?

Mr. Fox: No, I don't.

I think it's up to municipalities, hon. member. Let's let the municipalities have the vision of what they want to see going forward and let them work together collaboratively like what was done in West River and allow them to put a submission forward that government can review and look at and consider.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm good.

Thanks, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: Thank you, Chair.

I had a more general question relating to the land use, land planning. How is that dealt with in the municipality act?

Mr. Fox: Thank you, hon. member.

I think good land use and good land planning across the whole Island is needed. I would be very pleased to see what comes out of Land Matters 2020 that the Minister of Agriculture and Land is engaged in that consultation right now.

One thing I am hearing from municipalities is they want to have good land use planning in effect, or the ability to consider that with what happens in a municipality. I think that we're long overdue with a plan that has a good land-based eye looking at it.

Mr. Hammarlund: I completely agree, there is a great need.

As far back as I can remember, all governments have pushed land use and land planning matters down the road. I'm just wondering how you expect something that's quite complex and requires professionals, as well as community, how you see that happening. Do you see it divided up in between all kinds of small municipalities with a leftover unincorporated area –

Mr. Fox: I think that it falls within – I think we need to look to see what is going to come out of Land Matters 2020 and that consultation and what they hear from the residents and the people of PEI.

Mr. Hammarlund: I thought that was more about land ownership, but maybe I'm wrong.

Mr. Fox: The minister of agriculture might have an intervention.

Chair: Do you have an intervention? Do you want an intervention?

An intervention by the Minister of Agriculture and Land.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Chair.

Land Matters is the *Lands Protection Act*, *P.E.I.*, as well as the *Planning Act*, so land use.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: Thank you, I'm happy to hear that land planning might be coming in the future.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, minister. The federation of municipalities, how many municipalities are a member of the federation of municipalities?

Mr. Fox: That's a good question. Something tells me, right now, somewhere in the vicinity of 50% or a little –

Christine MacKinnon: There are 40.

Mr. Fox: Yeah, 40 municipalities of the 59 that belong to it.

One thing, as I stated to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, is I've had many conversations with the federation and I actually had a conversation with their executive director today on another matter. I'm very encouraged by – I've told them, I think that all municipalities need to be engaged within that federation. They've assured me that they're working on that and that they will make sure that, even though a municipality is not a member, that they will provide them information or support if they're asked.

Mr. Gallant: Am I correct or incorrect by assuming that the federation of municipalities is the spokesperson for all the municipalities? If you're not a member of it, how can they speak on your behalf?

Is that correct?

Mr. Fox: I can't say what their actual mandate is or comment on how they do business, but they see themselves as a voice for municipalities.

One conversation I've had with them in the past is that they realize there is municipalities that do not belong, but that they should consider any views that they might have also.

Mr. Gallant: To go back in history a little bit, the federation of municipalities was quite involved with the new MGA act, they had a lot of input into it. How is your communication going with them now that you're picking and changing things?

When you were over here 18 months ago, your biggest concerns were the 20 hours, was the cost to do an audit for small municipalities and population size.

There's municipalities that were just barely scraping by two years ago and are you helping them through your department or have they increased their taxes? Their land base hasn't gotten bigger. Some of them are surrounded by farmland which is not going to be part of it. It's in their municipality, but it's not their land to do anything with. They have no development.

What I'm trying to say is are you setting some of these municipalities up to fail? Have they increased their taxes or by you doing some of these things which I commend you for, because some of them couldn't afford the 20 hours and we were in those discussions and some of them couldn't afford the audit, but what makes things better for them now when their population hasn't increased and their taxes haven't gone up?

Mr. Fox: It's a good question.

Finances are a concern to some municipalities and the ability to pay for a financial audit or review engagement. However, any conversation I've had with municipalities is, yeah, it's a concern to them, but they agree that good financial accounting – as the hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford talks about – that good fiscal management and reporting of that is needed.

Some municipalities have been able to – they're working with our department and themselves to make sure that their financial reporting is up to date. I believe, right now, everybody is up to date, as of right now. That's the first year – some of these municipalities had to get an audit done, they were actually doing an audit for 18 months and not just one year so they were doing two year ends, basically, at the same time to try to close things off which, of course, is more expensive than compared to others.

One municipality, in particular, a small municipality, they've been able to secure their audit at a very low cost, less than \$1,000. Some councillors that I've talked to have stated that they want to see good governance, they want to, before they become a mayor or a councillor, they want to make sure the books are accounted properly, the same as we do in this House.

Some municipalities, they recognize that they provide a different service and utilities, which requires a separate audit. Some municipalities – you know, of course, if they receive gas tax money, that requires a separate audit as per the federal requirements. But we're offering assistance to these municipalities to help them with their financial reporting to ensure that they can do it in a good, economical way.

I can tell you that one conversation I've had was with an organization, the Central Development Corporation on – would they be willing to provide third party level type of accounting services to small municipalities? They're interested in that, which would be a shared service model. When then conversations – we talked about them actually taking on a staff member. The conversations I've had with the Central Development Corporation is where they could actually take on a chartered accountant that might be a retired individual or something on a part-time basis and they could provide that service to municipalities.

These talks are going on and I'm very aware that the finances of a municipality and their ability to pay – if they've only got maybe 50 transactions or 75 transactions in a complete year – is limited. But everybody agrees that they are receiving government money by some amount and that there needs to be financial accountability for that money.

Chair: Leader of the Opposition – or, sorry, the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Gallant: Thanks. I've been called that a few times.

Mr. Fox: Promotion? No offence there.

Mr. Gallant: Minister, so the MGA is starting to be – I'll use the word dismantled for a lack of a better word – to accommodate smaller municipalities. So, should there not be two tiers of this? From my understanding, this MGA started with previous minister and with the Federation of PEI Municipalities because the act was pretty old and things were not up to date in a lot of areas. Now, some of the things that were recommended that were voted on are being changed to accommodate – which, I think is great, what you're trying to do here for the smaller municipalities so they keep their identity – but how do they fall under the MGA if they're not following the rules of the MGA? Bigger municipalities got more stringent rules and a smaller one doesn't? Should there not be two templates here?

Mr. Fox: I don't see where is two different set of rules, to be honest. I don't see us dismantling it. I see us making changes or options available to ensure identities are kept, but there is still a level of governance

on an equal footing. You know, whether you're a mayor of Charlottetown or you're a mayor of St. Felix, you still have the same responsibility. At the end of the day, you're a mayor, right? As a councillor, you still have the same responsibility as a councillor whether you're in Summerside or you're in Charlottetown. So, I don't see it as dismantling. I don't see it as weakening it. I see it as listening to the municipalities of small, little – we'll say – tweaks to ensure that they're working with the MGA to the fullest. Some municipalities are going to have to account to a higher standard than others, yes, because they provide more services, right? The City of Charlottetown would have a greater responsibility to account for the money they deal with because they have a larger population than a place like Borden or Kinkora or St. Felix or Miscouche. So, of course, there would be a higher level of expectation, we'll say, on them because of the services they provide. At the end of the day, the responsibility as that municipality is the same.

Mr. Gallant: And one final question, minister; and I appreciate everything you're doing in your department and (Indistinct) with municipalities.

Are you committed to, if municipalities wanted to get together and talk about amalgamation, you're okay but you're not going to force any amalgamations, are you?

Mr. Fox: No. You have my word on that, hon. member.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you very much.

Chair: You're welcome.

Hon. members, it was the wishes of the committee that the bill be read section by section and I did allow some of the perimeters to be stretched a little bit and then they're blown wide open now. So, I have quite a list compiled. I'm going to ask, members, if you can get back to your questions pertaining to the section that we're on presently. So this is section 11.

Moving to the hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Chair.

I don't know if mine is pertaining to section 11. It just came as a follow-up to a statement that the minister had said. Could I ask for your indulgence to ask the question?

Chair: Sure, and there's been a willingness and an engagement to the other ones, so we'll see how that goes.

Ms. Beaton: Okay, thank you.

First question would be: How many certified professional planners does the department have on staff?

Mr. Fox: Christine.

Christine MacKinnon: Currently, we have one person.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you for that.

The question I had: you kind of pointed out that I speak often about the role of the Auditor General and the fiscal accountability (Indistinct) –

Mr. Fox: I think that's a good thing.

Ms. Beaton: I know. I do.

But what that triggered for me was – is I've had several people reference municipal value for money audits. In other jurisdictions, they have an office of the auditor in municipalities and I'm wondering if there's ever been any discussion within the department of the larger – like, I'm certainly not talking about somebody like Alexandra or anything like that, but we have a few major municipalities here in PEI. But has there ever been any discussions around having an Auditor General function to do performance audits within major municipalities?

Mr. Fox: No, there hasn't, hon. member.

Ms. Beaton: So, I think the role of the Auditor General is to ensure that taxpayers' money is being used in the way that it is said that it's going to be used. (Indistinct) have any further questions. I just – maybe we could have a conversation about what that might look like –

Mr. Fox: Yeah. Sure.

Ms. Beaton: – and if it makes sense to refer that to a standing committee to have a look at it or something along that line.

Mr. Fox: Good point.

Ms. Beaton: Okay, thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Fox: Thank you very much.

Chair: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

I know section 11 is about the ability of municipalities to share office resources.

My question is not – it's not specifically about that, but it is about the allocation of resources and the cost and time that a municipality spends, or is required to spend, on certain aspects.

The official planning process that municipalities go through: it's my understanding they're able to access some funding for a consultant to help with this, but they apply for that. Is that correct, just so I understand?

Christine MacKinnon: Chair, the official planning process is guided by the *Planning Act* and land use planning is, at this point, an optional service for municipalities. Yes, at this point, the federal gas tax capacity building program allows a municipality to make an application to pay for a consultant.

Ms. Altass: Oh, okay, so I might have – okay. I might have misunderstood where that support comes from, then. So that's a federal program that they apply to to get that additional support for the planning, not provincial?

Christine MacKinnon: That's correct.

Ms. Altass: Well, that's good to note.

One of the concerns I've heard from smaller municipalities is that it's good to have that support, but that the process itself is onerous, in terms of having to go through the application, when they're going to get approved anyway. So, I guess it is a federal

program so it's outside of provincial jurisdiction, but I don't know if the ministers in his department have ever considered perhaps providing some supports or suggesting to the federal government that there might be a more streamlined way to manage this process, since every municipality is going to have access to this anyway, so that they don't have to just keep applying and applying and every time they need it. I don't know if that's something you've ever considered, but it's a complaint I've heard from municipalities.

Mr. Fox: We'll take that under advisement and we have the conversation about that.

Chair: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: That's all, Chair.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: Thank you, Chair.

We have heard recently that the building code now will be applicable, I think, early next year.

How is that going to be enforced, in terms of municipality or lack of same? Obviously, the big cities that already follow – they have their own system set up. How would it apply to smaller municipalities or, for that matter, if there's none?

Mr. Fox: Thank you, hon. member, for the question.

That would not fall under our department or under the MGA. That would fall under the Department of Agriculture and Land.

Mr. Hammarlund: Thank you.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Section 12. Shall Section 12 carry? Carried.

Section 13. Carried.

Section 14. Carried.

Section 15. Carried.

Section 16. Shall section 16 carry? Carried.

Section 17. Carried.

Section 18. Carried.

Section 19. Carried.

Section 20.

Question from the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks, Chair.

This section, section 20 in subsection 119 allows councils to go into a closed session.

I'm wondering how the amendments, in this section, affect that power.

Christine MacKinnon: There is a list of reasons why a council can meet in private, in a closed meeting, behind closed doors.

These amendments are providing additional clarity to confirm that, if the matter is confidential and might identify individuals that that is a good reason for them to go behind closed doors.

We've also clarified that human resources matters, including labour relations or employee negotiations, can take place behind closed doors.

The other reference there is about conducting existing or anticipated legal proceedings or the review of legal advice could happen behind closed doors.

It hasn't removed anything. It simply added clarity about the reasons.

Leader of the Opposition: I appreciate that, Christine.

In order to go in camera, one or more of those situations has to be present, they can't just pass a motion to go in camera and simply do that.

Christine MacKinnon: That's correct. A reason must be provided under the appropriate section of the act.

Leader of the Opposition: If a member of the public felt that the municipality had

abused that opportunity to go in camera, is there any complaint mechanism or is there any recourse for a member of the public to come forward?

Mr. Fox: They could file a complaint.

Christine MacKinnon: Frequently, they'll ask for interpretation. They may appeal to the council for additional information.

The first point of request is typically to the council or to the CAO to provide information. Just to clarify that, although a council can close their meeting for a discussion, they are not allowed to make a decision behind closed doors.

At some point, whatever issue is being discussed must be presented to a public meeting for a resolution so that the ultimate decision is made in public.

Leader of the Opposition: Again, I appreciate that clarity. That's really important.

Discussions of a sensitive nature happen in camera and presumably are never made public, Christine?

Christine MacKinnon: Depending on the circumstance within very tight parameters, it may be that it's a private conversation, but if there is a decision to be made, it must be in public.

Leader of the Opposition: So no decisions are made in camera, then?

Christine MacKinnon: The intent is that there are no decisions. That's the legislation. It's very clear that there are no decisions made behind closed doors.

Leader of the Opposition: I want to go back to an answer you gave, Christine, to the Member from Mermaid-Stratford on the number of certified planners that we have.

Am I right, you said we have one currently?

Christine MacKinnon: Within the municipal affairs division, there is one registered planner, yes.

Leader of the Opposition: Is that a typical number for the department to have?

Christine MacKinnon: Within the *Municipal Government Act*, land use planning is simply one more of the services provided by municipality. The responsibility is delegated to the municipalities.

The rule that we have is in reviewing amendments to official planned documents but is authority under the *Planning Act*.

Leader of the Opposition: I may not get these statistics exactly right but, it's my understanding that 70% of the province, in terms of land base, is unincorporated and 90% of the province, in terms of land base, has no official land use plan.

Presumably in areas where there is no municipal capacity to do that, that falls to the Province. Is that correct?

Christine MacKinnon: Yes, that's correct.

Leader of the Opposition: So, in 90% of the land of this province, we have one certified planner to oversee that? Is that correct?

Mr. Fox: No.

Christine MacKinnon: The land use planning happens in the 29 of the 59 municipalities that have chosen to offer land use planning.

Mr. Fox: There's two departments. The minister takes care of the unincorporated areas.

Twenty-nine municipalities have land use planning in effect and then that one planner would take care of the rest.

Christine MacKinnon: But it's not a supervisory role. We simply administer amendments to the official plans and bylaws, the zoning bylaws by municipalities.

Although we're giving advice to the municipalities, we don't supervise the way they do land use planning. That's under the *Planning Act*.

Leader of the Opposition: This is my inability to grasp this but that 90% of the land base which is unincorporated, the land

use planning for that does not sit within your department?

Christine MacKinnon: No.

Leader of the Opposition: That sits with the Minister of Agriculture and Land.

I may ask a question about a number of certified planners that we have in that department looking after that land base.

Chair: You can ask the question –

Intervention requested by the Minister of Agriculture and Land.

Mr. Thompson: I believe we have three. Two for sure, I think it's three.

Leader of the Opposition: I ask this because there are a number of delays that I have experienced, not personally, but constituents have come to me and other members of my caucus regarding things that have to go through certified land planners.

Is three a typical number that we would have to look after that amount of land?

Chair: An intervention from the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Land.

Mr. Thompson: Probably could look at adding more.

To do the proper consultation and the work, it takes quite a bit of time. I haven't heard that we need more, but it's something that we will look at.

Leader of the Opposition: Those three planners, have they been present as employees in this role for quite some time?

(Indistinct) land use planners, certified planners, in the recent past?

Chair: Could you repeat the question, please, Leader of the Opposition?

Leader of the Opposition: Have we lost any certified planners from your department recently?

Chair: An intervention from the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Land.

Mr. Thompson: We just recently hired a new planner and actually a planner (Indistinct) municipal affairs department (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm good.

Thanks, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Gallant: Thanks, Chair.

I'd just like to go back to the in camera meeting. A municipality is having a meeting tonight and it starts at 7:00 p.m. and the general public is allowed to come, right? We can sit there and if they go into the committee of the whole or in camera, the general public has to leave. They discuss whatever they have to discuss. Could you give me an example of things that they would discuss? Do they come back to a regular meeting or does that come at the next monthly meeting and they vote on it?

They cannot vote in camera, did you say earlier?

Christine MacKinnon: That's correct.

Mr. Gallant: Can you make an example or is that just everything –

Mr. Fox: Everything. They can't make a decision in camera, behind a closed door.

If they want to make a decision based on a discussion they had behind the closed door, then they would have to bring forward a resolution or a motion back in the open.

A prime example could be a human resources matter where they're discussing a human resources matter in regards to an individual or a person or a staff member.

Mr. Gallant: So they would go in camera, have their discussions, then at a public meeting either later that evening or the next meeting, they would vote on that?

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Mr. Gallant: That's a HR issue.

Let's say they were providing services like water service or sewage service. If they went in camera that they were going to cut six residents off, they can't make that decision until they go back to public?

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Mr. Gallant: Is this something that was always there or something new in the MGA?

Mr. Fox: It's something that was always there.

Mr. Gallant: Okay, thanks.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Chair.

I'd just like to jump off what the Leader of the Opposition was asking about, when it comes to certified planning because I do think that this is a very important aspect of what's going to happen and be discussed in Land Matters PEI. It was a big discussion topic from the 2014 taskforce on land use planning. My understanding is there's one certified professional planner within your department. Are they certified with the PEI provincial Institute of Professional Planners?

Christine MacKinnon: I need to explain that there currently is no provincial framework for the self-regulated profession.

Although the act has been debated, it has not been proclaimed because the regulations needed to be developed. Planners that are certified in other jurisdictions come here to work but it's not a Prince Edward Island certification.

Ms. Beaton: Are you involved in writing those regulations? My understanding is that received Royal Assent – I believe in 2016.

Do you have any idea why PEI doesn't have its own act proclaimed at this point in time?

Christine MacKinnon: In the transition of departments last year, that responsibility was moved to the Department of Agriculture and Land. It's not part of fisheries and communities' mandate.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford, do you have another question?

Ms. Beaton: No, I don't.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Section 21.

The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Really, I just wanted to say thank you for your great work on this bill and especially thank you for moving forward with a lot of discussions that I had with the minister when I was the opposition critic and you're making some really good progress here.

I wanted to recognize Dave Pizio from Greenmount-Montrose for the work he has done. I see a lot of his concerns are addressed in here. I know it's not all addressed yet but these are some great steps forward, so I wanted to thank you very much.

Also, I was looking at the Leader of the Third Party and I wanted to say that those folks in St. Nicholas, as well, I think will be very happy with some of the changes in here.

I know there was a meeting there where they were electing a new council and they didn't have enough people and it was touch and go. It was a heartfelt moment where members of the community came forward but amendments like in Section 8 where you're allowing seven days to fill those additional vacancies are so important and I just wanted to say thank you.

Chair: Shall Section 21 carry? Carried.

Section 22. Carried.

Section 23. Carried.

Section 24. Carried.

Section 25. Carried.

Section 26. Carried.

Section 27. Carried.

Section 28. Carried.

Section 29. Carried.

Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Mr. Fox: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Fox: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning, that the 27th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 27, *Health and Dental Services Cost Assistance Act*, Bill No. 73, ordered for second reading.

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

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Health and Dental Services Cost Assistance Act*, Bill No. 73, read a second time.

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

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road 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 intituled *Health and Dental Services Cost Assistance Act*.

A request has been made to bring a stranger onto the floor.

Shall it be granted? Granted.

Good evening. Could you please state your name and title for Hansard, please?

Nichola Hewitt: Nichola Hewitt, Solicitor and Legislative Specialist with the Department of Health and Wellness.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Minister, would you like to commence with a brief statement on the bill's intent?

Mr. Aylward: Sure, Mr. Chair.

It's fairly straightforward. The *Health and Dental Services Cost Assistance Act* establishes the legislative framework to facilitate implementation of new health and dental services programs, under which government will be the payer of last resort.

Chair: Thank you.

Hon. members, is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause, section by section or open the bill up as a whole for general questions?

An Hon. Member: As a whole, Chair.

Chair: Thank you very much.

I am now taking names. Any questions?

The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

Section 21, the changes to the *Social Assistance Act* here, can you just tell me a little bit about that; what those changes are and what that means?

Nichola Hewitt: The *Social Assistance Act* has a provision that includes the provision of health care and dental services that are prescribed by regulations that would be persons who are eligible for assistance under the *Social Assistance Act* would be eligible for those types of benefits.

Ms. Altass: Can you elaborate a bit exactly what impact section 21 will have on those programs for social assistance clients?

Nichola Hewitt: Well, I guess it will all depend on what program you're looking at.

As discussed during our prior consultations, some of the benefits are being transitioned from social development and housing and coming over to health and wellness; one of them being the dental programs. We're actually offering – there's more low-income people that are going to be entitled to benefits under the new program that will be set up in these regulations. Indeed, many of the benefits will be enhanced for some of the recipients in those programs. That's the net result.

Ms. Altass: That is fantastic to hear and of course, we did talk about that when we did a consultation. Of course, I did have a question that I was expecting a response back on, but here we are.

What I want a guarantee on or what I would like to have some clarification on is: When this act is proclaimed, it's my understanding that the current dental supports that are available to social assistance clients will no longer be able to be available in the way they are currently. So, we would have to have the regulations in place for the new dental assistance program. Of course, I would expect that would happen, but should there be any delays on those regulations, I would want to make sure that this particular section of the act is not proclaimed until those regulations are definitely in place, so there's no gap in service.

Mr. Aylward: Certainly, you have our guarantee that that would not happen.

Ms. Altass: Just wanted to get that on the record.

Thank you, Chair. That's all.

Chair: You're welcome.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke covered much of what I was going to – the only sort of solid question, but a comment. I want to thank the minister. I want to thank Nichola for bringing this bill forward.

The expansion of dental services beyond those who are solely receiving social assistance is a profoundly big step forward for a large number of low-income Islanders who may not have dental coverage but, like all of us, suffer from dental problems from time to time. They can be debilitating; not just from a physical point of view but financially, as well, in order to restore that.

I don't think we can underestimate what an impact this is going to have on the lives of literally thousands of Islanders. I want to thank the minister for coming forward with this bill and with the budgetary promise to fund dental programs for a much larger number of Islanders than currently are covered.

Furthermore, that those who are receiving social assistance – and Nichola, you just said this. As a dentist previously, it was

heartbreaking not to be able to do what you know is best for the patient because of the restrictions of the program. I know that many dentists, regardless of that, would do what was necessary and just not claim the bill for it. But to be able to provide those people with the same level of dental services and the dignity that comes with that – not having to take teeth out that you knew did not have to come out – is, again, a huge step forward.

So thank you, minister, for the provision of this bill and for your commitment to financial support for these dental services.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Leader of the Opposition.

I want to add, too, that, although I believe in this and this has been a long time coming, I want to give credit to Dr. Joanne Stewart. She's a practicing dentist in Stratford. I vividly recall having a conversation with her one day at her office, where we started talking about seniors in long-term care and community care and how their oral hygiene suffers from the day they go in, whether it be dentures, plates, et cetera, et cetera. We had a really good conversation. We had a follow-up conversation with some of her colleagues as well around that.

That sort of is where the seed was planted and it just grew from there, so credit to Dr. Joanne Stewart.

Leader of the Opposition: I would echo that, and indeed, all the dental community, including those involved in public dental services: Dr. Albert, who presumably will be one of the people who will be thrilled when this bill passes.

On that note, can I ask a question regarding the division of provision of services? I know that private dental offices, as they have done for many, many years – providing the children's dental program here – will presumably be involved in the provision of this program, but will there be also an expansion of the public dental services?

I know when I came forward with our budget ask in the last operational budget, the 1.2 million to expand services, I consulted with Dr. Albert and he was thrilled at the prospect of the public service being

expanded. Is that going to be part of the plan?

Nichola Hewitt: I don't honestly know the answer to that. It was tonight at about 6:30 p.m., I was provided with a manual, so I just simply haven't had time to go through it and see exactly what's involved because we're very much still involved in regulation drafting and everything else. I'm working with, as you know, Dr. Albert – can't pronounce the rest of the name – and the folks out at primary care on developing this.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm good.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: You're welcome.

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just wondering about section 17, if you could explain that.

Nichola Hewitt: This is a clause that holds officers and directors of a corporation personally liable for decisions that are made by the corporation. It prevents them from hiding behind what we call in the legal world the corporate veil for actions they take or fail to take.

Mr. Myers: So, where would this come in? What's the background that this would be necessary?

Nichola Hewitt: Well, it's commonly used in many pieces of legislation. We had a great debate on this this past summer. We now refer to this in the office as the O'Leary clause because like I say, it was well debated. I don't know what else to say.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Nichola Hewitt: It's a legal concept that's important to hold people accountable for their actions or, like I say, failure to act.

Mr. Myers: Okay, thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

I wanted to just echo the Leader of the Opposition's comments on the appreciation for the supports being put forward for low-income Islanders for dental care.

I'm sure many of us have heard from constituents about what it's like to not be able to get the essential dental care you need when you need it and how that impacts your day-to-day life and snowballs, right? If you have a dental issue that becomes infected because you can't get the proper treatment, it really is devastating for individuals and also a drain on our health care system. So, this is a very effective investment.

I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his leadership on advocating for this: the 1.2 million. As the health critic, it's been a steep learning curve and for me, it's been a great opportunity to learn from his expertise in this area as his previous role as a dentist. I think this will make such a big difference for so many Islanders. So, I wanted to just say that.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Hudson: Thank you, Chair.

I do not have any questions on this bill; just two or three comments.

Certainly, I do appreciate the suggestions, the concerns that the official opposition have brought forward with regard to the continuity of benefits for those who would presently be covered under social assistance benefits, whether it's under any of the programs under my department presently.

I do want to give credit, certainly, to the Minister of Health and Wellness for his initiative on this.

Just going back to the comments, the concerns, that were brought forward by different members of the official opposition. I will echo the Minister of Health and Wellness's comments with regard to, when the regulations are put in place, to ensure that there is continuity of coverage there as well.

It was mentioned with regard to Dr. Stewart, I've had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Stewart several times over the last year and a half, as well as Paul H. Schurman who is a tremendous advocate for the enhancements that we are seeing here today.

Personally, I want to recognize both Dr. Stewart and Mr. Paul H. Schurman as well.

Thank you.

Chair: You're welcome.

Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Mr. Aylward: I move the title.

Chair: *Health and Dental Services Cost Assistance Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Aylward: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Aylward: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intitled *Health and Dental Services Cost Assistance Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning, that the 28th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 28, *An Act to Amend the Intimate Images Protection Act*, Bill No. 74, ordered for second reading.

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

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Act to Amend the Intimate Images Protection Act*, Bill No. 74, read a second time.

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

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road 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 *Act to Amend the Intimate Images Protection Act*.

A request has been made to bring a stranger onto the floor.

Shall it be granted? Granted.

Could you please state your name and title for Hansard?

Blair Barbour: Blair Barbour, Legislative Specialist for justice and public safety.

Chair: Thank you very much, Blair.

Promoter, would you like to start with a general statement on the bill's intent?

Mr. Thompson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is a very important private member's bill that was brought to the Legislature by the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park in the spring and I want to thank her for that.

This will update the *Intimate Images Protection Act* to make it more effective by adding a fast-track court process and by clarifying the act applies to altered images as well.

Chair: Thank you very much, minister.

Hon. members, is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause, section by section, or open it up as a whole to general questions?

Ms. Lund: Section by section

Ms. Bernard: Section by section.

In stereo.

Chair: Do we want section by section? Okay.

Section 1. Shall Section 1 carry?

Question from the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Ms. Bernard: What is changed in this section?

Blair Barbour: Section 1, of course, deals with the definitions that are applicable to the whole of the act.

What we've done is add some extra definitions to correspond to some of the terminology and added sections later in the bill.

We have amended the definition of intimate image so that it now provides – it's a visual recording of a person, whether or not the person is identifiable and whether or not the image has been altered in any way, and made by any means in which the person is or is depicted as

(i) engaging in a sexual act, or

(ii) is nude or nearly nude or exposing the person's genital organs, anal region or breasts, and

in relation to which the person had a reasonable expectation of privacy at the time the recording was made and, if the recording has been distributed, at the time it was distributed.

That's a substantive change to that definition.

In the definition of parent, we've changed the reference to a person under the – sorry, a person who is a minor to a person under the age of 18 years.

We've moved the section dealing with distribute to the definition section so now we have a definition of distribute that says it means to transmit, publish or otherwise make accessible.

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

That's good for that section.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Section 2. Shall Section 2 carry? Carried.

Section 3. Shall Section 3 carry? Carried.

Shall Section 4 carry?

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Ms. Bernard: What does Section 4 change?

Blair Barbour: Section 4 – it says Section 4 of the act is repealed. Are you asking what are we repealing?

Ms. Bernard: Yes.

Blair Barbour: We are repealing Section 4 because it is now incorporated into the new Section 3.

Previously, Section 4 said an action for the non-consensual distribution of an intimate image may be commenced without proof of damage. Section 3, we now incorporate that concept so Section 3 now says: A person who distributes or threatens to distribute an intimate image commits a tort that is actionable without proof of damage.

Ms. Bernard: That's good, Chair. Thank you.

Chair: Shall Section 4 carry? Carried.

Shall Section 5 carry? Carried.

Shall Section 6 carry?

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Ms. Bernard: Sorry, I'm getting lost in the sections here.

I just have a clarification around the parental part of it, I'm going to say parental responsibility in that. Which section would that be in?

Blair Barbour: That would be in Section 10 of the bill, Section 9 of your original bill.

Ms. Bernard: So I'm good for now, then.

Chair: Shall Section 6 carry? Carried.

Section 7. Shall it carry? Carried.

Section 8.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Ms. Bernard: I'm wondering what changed for Section 8.

Blair Barbour: Section 8 we're adding a new section and this is based on the draft model statute that was developed by the Uniform Law Conference of Canada.

It essentially provides where a person depicted in the intimate image consents to the distribution of the intimate image, and later revokes it, the person who distributed the intimate image has to make every reasonable effort to make the intimate image inaccessible to others. It includes a number of different things that that person should look at doing.

Essentially, it incorporates that concept that even though you've given consent, you can revoke consent and the person who was distributing has a legal duty to address the distribution of the intimate image.

Ms. Bernard: Thank you for that. I appreciate it.

I like that explanation. It takes it a step further. The one thing I really liked about this bill is that it put the onus on the person who shared the intimate image to prove that they had consent, not on the person who is living with the fact that their intimate image has been shared to prove that they did not provide consent.

I really appreciate that part and that I think it's a really good explanation to why consent is kind of a fluid thing. You can take back consent at any time. I really appreciate that.

Thank you very much.

Chair: Shall Section 8 carry? Carried.

Section 9. Shall section 9 carry?

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Ms. Bernard: I'm going to ask the same question for almost every section. I'm just wondering what this section changed.

Blair Barbour: Section 8 of the original bill provided for the remedies that the court could order in an action under that bill. The reason we're repealing that is that the material is now addressed in section 5.2 of the amendment.

Ms. Bernard: That's good.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall Section 9 carry? Carried.

Section 10.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Ms. Bernard: This is the parental part, right?

Blair Barbour: Correct.

Ms. Bernard: Can you explain that, please?

Blair Barbour: Yes.

In your original bill, there was a clause that provided that: where a defendant, in an action for the non-consensual distribution of an intimate image, is under the age of

majority, a parent of the defendant shall not be jointly and severally liable for any damages awarded to the plaintiff unless the court is satisfied that the parent directly participated in the non-consensual distribution of the intimate image.

The department, after the bill was passed, went and asked legal counsel about whether or not that clause was necessary, given the common law, the tort law in the area. What we were advised was that there are two – well, number one, a parent cannot be held vicariously liable for the actions of their children. They can be held liable in their own account in two ways.

First is one that you've mentioned in the original section, they've directly participated in the commission of the tort so they were an active part.

What we did discover, through our research, was that the common law also holds that parents have a common law duty to supervise the activities of their minor children and if they are negligent in that, they can be found liable as well for any damage caused to a third party associated with the breach of that duty.

Ms. Bernard: We did have quite a wholesome briefing on this, where we had the opportunity to ask a lot of questions and have some of these answered already so I appreciate that.

Where my head went there was, you know, how fast technology changes and people who are not technologically inclined, like me, it's hard to keep up. If you don't know what you're looking for or you don't know – you know, you're trying to stay on top of what your children or youth are doing and you try your hardest and yet this still happens, what sort of – how are you held responsible, as a parent, if your child or your youth were sharing images?

Blair Barbour: I think what I might do, if it's okay, I'll quote from a Newfoundland provincial court decision. I think they summarize the law well.

They say: because parents are in a position to govern their child's behaviour, they have a corresponding duty to use reasonable care to prevent foreseeable harm to others by

proper supervision. Liability may arise for negligence in the exercise of that control should injury or loss occur.

The parent's obligation to supervise has its limits and these are prescribed by the practices and usages prevailing in a community based upon a common understanding of what is practicable. The extent to which a parent is expected to supervise the activities of a child varies with the age of the child. The duty is heaviest when the child is very young, since it is both vulnerable, due to its naïve actions, and when it's dangerous to others, due to its unpredictable and impulsive acts.

As a child grows older, the expectation that it will adhere to mature conduct increases and a duty to supervise, in order to prevent harm, declines.

The extent of parental supervision required varies with age and diminishes as the child gets older, barring unusual and known proclivities in the child. If you have a 12-year-old, the duty of supervision will be much higher than a 17-year-old and, similarly, if you have a 17-year-old who has never crossed that boundary of behaviour, you'll be held to less of a standard than if you knew that 17-year-old has done this in the past.

The court will look at that and make a determination in the circumstances of that case.

I would also add too, I know that the evolution of technology is an issue and how we adapt and the beautiful part about the common law is these principles evolve, they've evolved for hundreds of years and they go into the digital age as well.

The court will look, as the court mentioned here, they'll look at what the community expectations and standards are to determine what's the appropriate level of supervision in this particular case for the parent to use.

Ms. Bernard: I don't know what section I would make this comment in, I made it on the briefing as well, but community legal information, so Sarah Dennis, along with Jaime Griffin of the Women's Network, came together and created a really amazing presentation that they're going to be

presenting to certain classes in Grade 7.

The minister of education may want to listen here for a second if he's not already.

They came together and created a presentation and they did so with the guidance of youth, a youth committee that they worked with, to make sure that the language was accessible, that the language was clear, that the language was relatable by children – in Grade 7, you're not a child – but well related to the youth, even down to the detail, they wanted to have a lawyer to come in because they're trying to explain the connection between relationship, consent and the law.

They come at it from a really interesting perspective that we, as adults, aren't necessarily going to just think of on our own. Down to the details in terms of they wanted to bring a lawyer in to talk about the legal aspects of it and the youth said, well that's fine, as long as they're not wearing a suit and so it's really trying to make it accessible.

They have even said – I can't remember if she said they're in the midst of it or if they're thinking about having, also, a parent presentation that goes along with it, which would be the same presentation so that everyone is on the same page.

I think that something as serious as the sharing of intimate images, while it's not just specifically the sharing of intimate images that we necessarily want to get parents and children talking about, but this whole idea of consent and this whole idea of how our world is changing and this whole idea of the power you have of your own body, the power you have in your relationships, the power imbalances, all of those things that they break down.

I would really encourage – I know this isn't part of the bill – but I'd really encourage you to look at this presentation and they want to get into the schools. I know they're getting into certain Grade 7 classes but I think it's a real inequity and a real disservice to the other Grade 7 students to not have this. They're willing to do it and it's done and it's amazing.

I leave that with you.

Chair: Charlottetown-Victoria Park, do you have any other questions?

Ms. Bernard: I'm good, thank you.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Section 11. Shall it carry? Carried.

Section 12. Shall it carry? Carried.

Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Mr. Thompson: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Intimate Images Protection Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Thompson: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intitled *An Act to Amend the Intimate Images Protection Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to call Bill No. 75 for second reading. This bill was introduced this afternoon.

Speaker: Hon. members, is there unanimous consent for 75?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Speaker: Hon. minister, you have unanimous consent.

Clerk: *Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act*, Bill No. 75, read a second time.

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

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act*, Bill No. 75, read a second time.

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

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road 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 *Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act*.

A request has been made to bring a stranger onto the floor.

Shall it be granted? Granted.

Would you please state your name and title for Hansard?

Blair Barbour: Blair Barbour, Legislative Specialist at the Department of Justice and Public Safety.

Chair: Thank you very much, Blair.

Minister, would you like to commence with a brief statement on the bill's intent?

Mr. Thompson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This act provides legal framework for the government to carry on a direct and distinct legal action against certain parties to recover costs of health care benefits provided in relation to the opioid crisis.

Chair: Thank you, minister.

Is there anyone that didn't receive a copy of this bill?

Hon. members, is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause, section by section, or open the bill up as a whole?

Leader of the Opposition: Section by section.

Chair: Section by section; okay.

Section 1: any questions?

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I know the promoter of the bill just gave an overview there, but I'm still a little unclear as to exactly what the purpose of this bill is. So, that's likely my inability, but if somebody could explain a little further –

Blair Barbour: It is a very technical bill. The legislation is being brought forward to facilitate the government's efforts to recover the cost of health care services and social services related to the opioid crisis; for instance, the cost of emergency services and response to overdose events, the cost of hospital treatment, and various other health costs, including – related to addictions.

This is similar to the existing *Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act*. It establishes a new statutory tort related to opioid wrongs – or opioid-related wrongs is how we define them. It establishes the government has a direct cause of action to recover health care costs, the cost of health care benefits, from those who have committed an opioid-related wrong as defined in the act.

Currently, there are a number of significant lawsuits and bankruptcy proceedings related to the manufacture, wholesale, and distribution of opioids in both United States and Canada. This gives us a statutory tort to be able to sue opioid-related companies for damages based on – how do we deal with it here – on an aggregate basis. So, we don't need, in the act, to identify particular individuals or prove the causes of opioid-related disease, injury, or illness for any particular individual. We can proceed by way of an aggregate action relying on population-based evidence to prove our claim, enabling the litigation to proceed as efficiently as possible while still preserving fairness.

So, it's really similar to the tobacco litigation that the government's been involved with for some time.

Leader of the Opposition: How many other provinces have such statutes?

Blair Barbour: Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our bill was based on the Alberta model, in particular, but they are all very similar.

Leader of the Opposition: Is there a similar – or I guess a complementary statute federally regarding criminal litigation of situations like this?

Blair Barbour: I'm not aware on what the federal government has done on the criminal side, but all of the provinces, to one degree or another, either have enacted legislation or are looking at it, because of the litigation that is currently underway. The legislation really – it helps us protect our claim to compensation, even when these cases are occurring in other jurisdictions.

Leader of the Opposition: Again, I'm exposing my ignorance here, but in a situation like this, can provinces come forward with what you might call a class action suit, or do we have to do this independently and is that why we have this bill?

Blair Barbour: There actually has been a class action suit commenced in British Columbia and we are a member of that class

with other provinces and territories. We can participate in other jurisdictions' litigation.

There is also litigation in Saskatchewan, but there, we are involved as a public health insurer. So, we have a claim for any damages that the plaintiffs might collect from those companies for any damages related to opioid use.

Leader of the Opposition: So, Blair, given that we are participants in an ongoing case at the moment, what is the advantage of – I'm not suggesting that we don't have it – I'm just wondering why we need our own statute.

Blair Barbour: Essentially, our legal counsel, when looking at all the litigation that is occurring – including in the United States where there are bankruptcy proceedings with one of the companies, Purdue – provided an argument that our claim would be more robust or treated more strongly in other jurisdictions if we could show that that legislation was in place.

Leader of the Opposition: I understand, from what you said earlier, that there's no burden of proof at an individual level for people who have incurred costs or the health system has incurred costs for a particular individual, but it's on a per capita basis? Is that right, that a claim would be made?

Blair Barbour: This legislation pertains to litigation brought by the government only, not to individuals, but it allows the government to make a case for compensation based on aggregate population data and an estimation of the costs that have occurred because of opioid-related wrongs and that are likely to occur because of opioid-related wrongs that have taken place.

Leader of the Opposition: Are the costs, Blair, specifically and solely related to health care costs that one can claim?

Blair Barbour: We do define cost of health care benefits in 1. (a). It's the present value of the total expenditure by government for health care benefits provide for insured persons and health care benefits is defined further on but that includes other expenditures by the government may directly or, through one or more agents or other intermediary bodies for programs,

services, benefits or similar matters associated with opioid-related disease, injury or illness.

In the definition, as well, it refers to the *Social Assistance Act*, the *Long-Term Care Subsidization Act*, as well as the more obvious ones that you would associate with the health care system.

It's fairly broad, it would include the benefits under the *Social Assistance Act* as well as the health care benefits.

Leader of the Opposition: The most egregious examples of the opioids which are presumably leading to the bankruptcy of certain pharmaceutical companies are based on the fact that they were specifically designed to become addictive and, of course, they did not reveal that, it was only later on through scientific study that we understood that.

In addictions, for sure there are health costs, but there are also social costs, there are judicial costs. Is there any mechanism in this bill to recover any of those, what you might call, subsidiary costs?

Blair Barbour: No, this would be related to the recovery of health care benefits, as we've defined them. It would be limited to the definitions we've provided here, which are quite extensive in terms of what that includes.

Leader of the Opposition: Do we have any sense as to what sort of dollar figure we might be looking at here for the treasury? In a successful litigation, of course.

Blair Barbour: I did speak to council about that and we don't have a figure at this stage. It's still being quantified in terms of the claims we currently have in litigation.

We are looking at that with class council, for instance, in a BC case, what that might be.

Leader of the Opposition: In the BC case, that provincial government presumably has come forward with a figure attached to their litigation. Can you tell us what that is?

Blair Barbour: I don't have that detail with me today.

Leader of the Opposition: As an intervener in that case, I'm not sure if I'm using the correct term –

Blair Barbour: A member of the class.

Leader of the Opposition: A member of the class. Any damages that are given to the provincial government in BC, do we have any possibility of getting some of that money, or do we have to come forward with our own suit?

Blair Barbour: We would be a member of the class and so, when damages are awarded to the class, I believe that the damages would be – there would be some direction as to how those damages would be divided among members of the class.

It would not be equal, per se. There would be some guidance on how to divide those.

Leader of the Opposition: That's interesting.

So, when BC came forward with their litigation, would agreements have been made with the other provinces who are part of that action prior to the 70 million, or whatever it is figure, with an understanding that a certain portion of that would eventually come back to that province as an active participant?

Blair Barbour: I can't really speak to what has occurred in the litigation with any great detail because it's not part of my brief, it's not part of what I've been working on.

I do know, though, that as a member of the class and the provinces are represented collectively by class council, that they would be collaborating to the extents that they have class council.

Leader of the Opposition: If PEI were to bring forward its own case, other provinces could – excuse the phrase – piggyback on our case so we might have a similar arrangement with them. Is that possible?

Blair Barbour: I think, at this stage, with the BC class action, I want to say we likely wouldn't have a need to commence a case here, that we would be able to pursue that claim through the BC class action.

I don't think that there would be a need for a multiplicity of lawsuits dealing with the same sort of damages. That's why we're a member of that class in the BC action.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm kind of happy to hear that, Blair, because I don't know, but my instinct tells me that a class action suit against a large pharmaceutical company could be an expensive proposition.

If the purpose of this bill is to prevent us – well, not prevent us – but allow us to participate with, as you put it, a more robust position elsewhere, then I think it's a very good thing.

I don't think I have any more questions, Chair.

Thank you, Blair, for that explanation.

Chair: The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

Mr. MacDonald: I know, when we were in government, this was talked about during some of these lawsuits after OxyContin and Purdue in the US.

Certainly, when we got to this point, Blair, I think it was 67 or \$68 million that BC was suing.

We join the lawsuit and we get our share, whatever it may be and, obviously, like the Leader of the Opposition said, it would be a little expensive for a small province like ourselves to take on a large pharmaceutical, but has there been any diagnosis, if that's the term, to get that money to those families that were directly affected by the opioid overdose?

Blair Barbour: That's not something I could really provide an answer to today. That's not something I would have brought with me.

Chair: The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

Mr. MacDonald: That's fine, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

I have a very similar question, actually.

Should we be successful in this, the BC lawsuit or any subsequent lawsuits, is there any stipulation or any guarantee of how that money would be spent, where it would go?

Blair Barbour: The legislation itself, the bill does not provide that direction.

Should the government be successful in getting compensation, the moneys would come to government and then it would be a Cabinet decision, as with any moneys that come into government, how those are expended.

Chair: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: Okay, that's it.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks, Chair.

Blair, you had mentioned that this is similar to (Indistinct) statute that we have. Has any money ever flowed to government coffers as a result of that?

Blair Barbour: I don't have direct knowledge, but I believe that the tobacco action is still ongoing. Litigation can take quite a while but, to the best of my knowledge, the litigation is still in process.

Leader of the Opposition: You mentioned earlier that at least one of the pharmaceutical companies in question has claimed bankruptcy.

Maybe this is an impossible question, but is there any likelihood that we will ever see any money in the provincial coffers as a result of actions here?

Blair Barbour: Against that particular company or generally?

Leader of the Opposition: Generally speaking.

Blair Barbour: Again, the litigation file is not my brief so I don't know all the details, but I would assume we would not pursue an

action if we thought there was no money at the end of the case.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm good. Thank you, Chair.

Some Hon. Members: Carry the bill.

Chair: The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

Mr. MacDonald: Carry the bill.

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Shall the schedule carry? Carried.

Mr. Thompson: I move the title.

Chair: *Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Thompson: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Deagle: Call the hour.

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

I'll call on the hon. Member from Morell-Donagh.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, that this House adjourn until Friday, November 20th, at 10:00 a.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Safe travels home, everyone.

The Legislature adjourned until Friday, November 20th, at 10:00 a.m.