



Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island
Standing Committee on Social Development

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Date of Hearing: Thursday 23 February 2006

Meeting Status: Public

Location: Pope Room, Coles Building

Subject: The Committee will be given a briefing on the issue of cyber-bullying by June Sanderson, Counselling Specialist, Department of Education; other presenters will be confirmed

Committee:

Wayne Collins (Chair), MLA Winsloe-West Royalty
Richard Brown, MLA Charlottetown-Kings Square, replaces Carolyn Bertram, MLA Crapaud-Hazel Grove
Robert Ghiz, MLA Charlottetown-Rochford Square, Leader of the Opposition
Wes MacAleer, MLA Charlottetown-Spring Park, replaces Beth MacKenzie, MLA Park Corner-Oyster Bed
Wilbur MacDonald, MLA Belfast-Pownal Bay
Elmer MacFadyen, Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs
David McKenna, MLA Glen Stewart-Bellevue Cove

Member absent:

Carolyn Bertram, MLA Crapaud-Hazel Grove; Beth MacKenzie, MLA Park Corner-Oyster Bed

Guests

June Sanderson, Counselling Specialist, Student Services, Department of Education; Julie Matheson, student

Staff:

Marian Johnston, Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees

Edited by Hansard

The Committee met at 10:00 a.m.

Chair (Collins): Good morning, everybody and welcome to this next meeting of the Standing Committee on Social Development.

I want to, first of all, thank everyone for their appearance here this morning, and just take note that Wes MacAleer is substituting for Beth MacKenzie and Richard Brown is here substituting for Carolyn Bertram.

Today we have an agenda in front of you. If I could get a quick motion of approval for the agenda this morning. All those in favour, aye?

Hon. Members: Aye!

Chair: Good.

We are going to continue and actually get started with public presentations on Motion No. 14, Cyber-bullying and violence prevention among youth. We're very pleased to welcome to the table this morning Ms. June Sanderson, Counselling Specialist with Student Services in the provincial Department of Education; and we really would like to welcome back to our hearing table Julie Matheson, a student. Julie, you may recall, was one of the presenters during our discussions on the impaired driving strategy for Prince Edward Island. Was that the issue when we last saw you?

Julie Matheson: No, it was climate change.

Chair: Climate change, pardon me, my apologies. Yeah, this Committee does too many issues, but it's nice to have you back, Julie. Thank you very much.

Then, a little later on, we're going to hear from the Clerk of Committees regarding responses to surveys that this committee put forward on the topic of cyber-bullying to Island schools and businesses.

But welcome, Ms. Sanderson and welcome Ms. Matheson and we're going to turn things over to you now as we begin our formal public presentations on this issue. The floor is yours.

June Sanderson: Okay, thank you very much.

Thank you to you for bringing up this important issue. As I just mentioned to Mr. McKenna, this certainly would not be a field that I would call myself an expert in, and I think there would be many in the province that would say that. Because it's a new issue that's in front of us that we're kind of working behind the times because our youth are so far ahead of us on this particular topic, and so we're constantly working to stay ahead of them. Hence, I brought with me an expert.

Thank you, too, to Minister Dover and you for putting forward the motion in the fall. I think it's important and I think it's timely. I thought that I'd maybe mention some of the larger picture bullying as seen as an imbalance of power and certainly being defined these days as a relationship issue. Always when we see bullying it's a relationship issue and an imbalance of power. Set inside of that would be this whole topic of cyber-bullying and/or electronic bullying.

When I use the term electronic bullying, it seems to me that it's a little more inclusive. So Julie and I will probably use those terms interchangeably as you may, but I know the motion used the term cyber-bullying specifically.

We're going to start off using a definition for cyber-bullying that I took from Bill Belsey, who's a well renowned, internationally renowned Canadian, with a well renowned website called

<http://www.bullying.org>

and his definition of cyber-bullying states:

“Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies such as e-mail, cell phone and pager text messages, instant messaging, defamatory personal Web sites, and defamatory online personal polling Web sites, to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others.”

So throughout the course of the next few minutes we will give examples of each one of those - I think we have - and try to put that into a framework of what's happening locally.

One of the issues that makes this so pervasive is that technology allows us to be invisible. So we are allowed, behind our computers, through our cell phones, and in many different formats electronically, to invisibly harm others. In this instance we would say that the kids would say that they have nowhere to hide. People would say they have nowhere to hide. You can't get away from it. Whereas when it was a face-to-face form of bullying where that power imbalance took place, there would be somewhere to hide. You could get away from it. You could respond to it. But in this case that's not necessarily available to the user.

The other pieces that I find to be - kids have told me, and I've seen in my work as a counsellor, that when you use just the words, when all you can see is the words, there's no contextual clues, there's no body language, there's no tone of voice involved. So the message can be very easily misinterpreted, and that happens all too often.

So things to consider there are anonymity, the no further information, no contextual clues, non-verbal clues such as our body language, and tone of voice is so important. They're lacking when we use electronic

forms of bullying.

Julie Matheson: Something that may have been intended as a joke could easily be taken just as something hurtful because you can't tell how someone is intending that. It's very easy to get caught up in the moment and not really think of the fact that there's a person at the other computer reading what you say. You're just reacting and attacking and just putting the words out there with no further thought.

June Sanderson: Dr. John Suler describes it as the disinhibition effect. He's Canadian. He says that we are so disinhibited when we get on the electronic forms of communication, all our inhibitions can be lost and we don't have that natural screening that would take place for us. So it's called the disinhibition effect. Julie and I both feel that that speaks to what we have seen and heard.

Another piece is that it's a hit-and-run strategy. That you can say what you're thinking and you can duck away from it and not have to deal with the results of the effects that your language has had on the receiver. Also, on receiving a message, you can quickly respond without having that inhibition that might take place in a face-to-face intervention. You can quickly respond to it and get away from it on a moment of anger when you didn't have a chance to think about what you were going to - the method in which you were going to respond.

Julie Matheson: There's also the problem of teenagers tend to keep to themselves what they do online. It's a very private thing seen as an interaction with your friends. You don't generally want to involve your parents, and even when you do, they don't understand the type of technology that we use and the way our lives revolve around it. Even if you make them aware of a problem, they often don't really have any experience

with it as they would with face-to-face bullying because it's a new problem.

June Sanderson: Another factor here is that there's somewhat of a neutralization of status. So where someone might not say someone - say, use their words to be harmful to someone in an authoritative position such as a teacher, an administrator, a parent, they can use electronic messaging to say something and it puts people or it's perceived to put people on a more equal footing. So your status is somewhat neutralized and that type of an inhibition is also removed with this form of bullying.

I'm going to turn it over to Julie to tell us somewhat about some of the experiences that she has heard from her peer group and issues that they have dealt with or that she sees being dealt with.

Julie Matheson: Most of the teenagers I know are really dependent on MSN, the instant messaging service. We use it for everything, making plans, interacting with people. But often even when we're bored, we don't have anything else to do on a Friday night, a group of kids will be hanging out and they'll go online. What they wouldn't probably do if they were just by themselves, they might think: Maybe it would be fun to kind of pick on another kid that we may even be friends with because it's really easy and it's kind of - it can be seen as entertaining, and they don't really think of how that person being by themselves and not understanding that it's all in fun will take it as an attack on them personally.

Other kids who want to attack someone else, they can easily pretend to be another person. They can pretend to be a friend or try to start something. It's really easy to make a new e-mail address or MSN account and remain anonymous, or even if you change one character or one number of someone else's address to make a new one, then it's very

easy to still be perceived as that person and start trouble that way.

Often people will hack into another person's e-mail even and then use that. It's really easy with most providers of e-mail because all you need to know is the answer to their secret question which is often something like where were you born or what was the name of your first pet? If you know anything about that person, it's very possible you will know that information. You can even guess passwords a lot of the time because they're just words and often people will use the same password over and over again.

In junior high it was a big problem with that because everyone's password was often: I love whoever they were dating that week, and then if you knew that, then you could just hack into their e-mail and do that that way.

The more recent problem has been online blogs like my journal and blogger. If you're angry at someone, people kind of treat it as a private journal and will use it to vent about something. But they don't think of the fact that other people read it and it's out there in the open for everyone to see and will post hurtful things that should be kept to themselves but aren't.

Those also have comments features which allow people to respond to the things that are said, and that will often start arguments, and even are used by people who want to remain anonymous and will just randomly go and post insults about other people. They have no way of knowing who that was or why they even did that.

June Sanderson: Any questions?

Chair: Is that the conclusion of your presentation?

June Sanderson: No.

Chair: Okay. Any questions from any of our members to this point of their presentation today? I'm going to take a list here. No, you continue on, June.

June Sanderson: Okay. I wanted to talk a little bit about the habitual users and what some of the issues are with them.

My experience would tell me, and certainly the research would support, that the students or the young people - and I'm saying young people. It's not necessarily restricted to youth, but it's because we come from a school system background, I think, that they're our focus. But the youth that are more habitually involved in this form of communication are less likely to be well supported in their communities. They don't necessarily have a good network of supports either through sports, their community recreation centres, in their homes. Don't necessarily have an adult that's in regular contact, aware of what they're involved in. So they're often more isolated. Also, more likely to be an introverted personality type rather than an extrovert and find that form of communication more in keeping with their personality. They have control over and they can stay in the confines of their own home. So it can become very problematic in that way too, because it can mushroom into that student becoming a real isolate rather than finding those human-to-human interaction opportunities.

I wanted to mention some extreme examples. I felt it's important for us to bring this issue home because all too often we see it as something that happens somewhere else but not in our own town. I dealt with an issue within the last year with a student who was using a cell phone in the school and received text messaging from a predator in this community who lured the girl to a location in our community, a public location, and she was sexually assaulted on that lure.

I was hesitant to bring that forward but I think it's important for us to bring it home and know that it happens right here, it happens in our community, it happens to our youth, and it's difficult to keep ourselves protected from that.

In this case that girl had a wonderful support network of friends who unfortunately, weren't capable of keeping her out of the situation, but in the end helped her to report the situation and actually took the cell phone away for awhile, too. So there were some things that got put in place. That's one example of something that might happen.

Did you want to talk about that?

Julie Matheson: There was also another case in Canada of a person named David Knight. Some people at his school made a website entitled: This is the page that makes fun of Dave Knight. That became a big problem. It was up for several months before he even found out about it. Then his parents tried to get the school involved but the school couldn't find out who did it so they couldn't really solve that problem. Then they went to the service provider and it took them almost six months before they could get the website taken down.

June Sanderson: Another thing that I would hear often in my office was prior to sporting events - not major - local sporting events where there would be rival teams going on the fields or into the rinks against each other, and the members of a team - and these would be really nice kids, but they would use this form of threat to another player prior to a game to try to and give themselves a psychological advantage in the sporting event.

That is happening with great frequency. So that's a form of threatening that is perceived by the individual as being a part of the game, but can be interpreted on the other end as being very damaging. So we'd have that

being reported, and when I know that it was being reported a lot, we know that a very small percentage of the incidents are actually reported.

I wanted to go through a little bit about what the Department of Education is doing right now in terms of our initiatives to try and keep this from escalating to a further level. Every school in the province has in its possession a program through medialiteracy.ca. They have three presentations. The names of the presentations are: Kids for Sale, the second one is Authenticating Online Information, and the third one is Safe Passage. Certainly that's the one that would fit under the umbrella of the issue that's in front of us this morning. Those programs are available for all teachers to receive professional development through and there's support from the department to provide that education piece.

Every student in the school also signs with their parent an Internet usage agreement - and a lot of us around the table would be familiar with those - in an attempt to keep parents aware that their students will be using the Internet in the school sites. But the school sites are, in my opinion, very well blocked in terms of eliminating the opportunity for students to access sites that are more damaging and to use damaging e-mails. But they certainly don't solve all of the issues: a lot more availability, though, in our homes to what the students can get through to.

The health curriculum is being revamped right now, and in every grade level of the health curriculum there will be suggestions for teachers to use with their students to help them know how to keep themselves safe in the area of electronic bullying. But the health curriculum is being updated. So there'll be a three-year rollover there before we have it through grades one to nine, but that is happening.

There are outcomes identified in the information technology curriculum for all grade levels and all subject areas. So that's happening, but it's such a small piece, you know, but that is what's happening.

Now, we have a few recommendations that we felt we would put forward. The first piece we feel is education, and we were - do you want to talk about it?

Julie Matheson: The major problem is that parents and, to a certain extent, the school system don't understand the problems and how bad they can get. One thing that all parents have to see is the Internet usage agreement. If more information were put in that to kind of educate them on how to deal with this, almost all Internet browsers and computer systems come with parental control software of some kind. If they were to use that, then they could have more control over what their kids are doing and they should also have more of a knowledge of what's going on and try to be more included in such a big part of their kid's lives.

June Sanderson: Julie was suggesting earlier that on the Internet usage agreement we put an information sheet on the back of that for parents and that, and that goes into every home and every parent has to see it. So I think it's a really good suggestion and I'll take that back to the department as well.

I think that it's really important for us to continue to support our students in becoming involved in their communities. The at-risk students are very likely uninvolved, as I said earlier, in their communities. So the community piece, to me, is very important on all topics and this one is no exception.

The mentoring programs that are mentioned in the task force, I think it'd be a wonderful initiative. They need to happen not only in our schools but in our communities,

targeting certainly here would be what we would define as at-risk youth. Want to support the initiatives that schools already have in place regarding peaceful schools and respectful school initiatives. We need to support those continued programs and initiatives. I feel that it would be timely to take a look at student access to cell phones in our schools on a daily basis and take a look at how we're dealing with that right now.

We also need to - and we being education through the board - need to update our policies to include the issues regarding bullying using electronic media.

I think it's also very important for us to look at Home and School. I understand that Home and School is doing a presentation here. So that's a big piece for us that we need to work cooperatively in this particular issue. Anything else?

Julie Matheson: I don't think so.

June Sanderson: Okay. This is the end of our presentation. I want to say thank you to you once again and good luck in your deliberations. Hopefully there'll be something come from the things that you hear and learn through this process that will transfer into a change in our environment here for Islanders.

Chair: June and Julie, I want to thank you both very much for a very fine and insightful presentation here today. It gets us off on a good footing, I think, and I really appreciate your opening remarks about definitions of cyber-bullying and the whole issue of this disinhibition effect. I think that's quite interesting, and I thank you very much.

I want to ask our Committee members, if they have any questions, I can start a list going here. Yes, Richard Brown.

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you. Thank you for

your presentation (Indistinct). So are you the - we had a committee report in May 2003, the Standing Committee on Social Development, and one of the recommendations was a provincial coordinator. So are you the provincial coordinator for bullying?

June Sanderson: No, there never was a provincial coordinator announced. That was the issue regarding bullying in the larger picture?

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

June Sanderson: No, there was no one identified for that. My title is School Counselling Specialist. So underneath that mandate, oftentimes in every school, the issue of bullying, peaceful schools, the leadership piece for that comes to the school counsellors. It's appropriately placed there, but there is no one at the department that would have direct responsibility for that.

In the boards in the districts, the Eastern School District does have that placed under someone's mandate, but it's handled in a lot of different ways, Richard. It's not necessarily under one person.

Mr. R. Brown: Okay, so how many school counsellors do we have on Prince Edward Island and what is our ratio to other provinces? So, you know, PEI has - like, I know Tex MacDonald out at Colonel Grey, he has my daughter quite a bit. I'll get shot for that one.

June Sanderson: I don't know quite how to respond to that. The department could say that right now we're funded on a 1:400 ratio for our counsellors, so we're sitting in good stead on that one, in my opinion. However -

Mr. R. Brown: Well, say, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

June Sanderson: We're sitting in good

stead, but we have miles to go. Now this could be another half hour if you get me on.

Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. R. Brown: Well, it's your turn.

Chair: We're here to listen.

June Sanderson: How many counsellors are in the province? There are probably - now I should know this off the top of my head. But there would be somewhere in the area of 50 to 55. Many schools, though, have counsellors in their setting who also have fairly large teaching assignments and are very much - very fragmented. A very professional group in this province, every one of our school counsellors have a Masters of Education in Counselling or a comparable master's but they're all at the master's level. With a couple of exceptions, they also all have Bachelors of Education coupled to another undergraduate degree. So we have a very well qualified group in our school system here.

We would be unique in that too. I am very proud of the school counsellors in this province. We have a wonderful group of people. Okay, but they are a very fragmented group, and every time we add anything else onto that we further fragment the roles that they're in. They are in umbrella positions, in my opinion. In some cases they're seen as part of the administrative team, and rightly so. So they take on a lot of the social issues, and are yet expected to be able to respond to the academic piece and they're so well interconnected.

So your question in regards to how many and our ratio are - in that ratio though, the people that are in the board and district offices are also taken out of that ratio, right? So where we have counselling consultants, we have registered psyches and so on, it all comes out of that ratio. We know from Minister Dover's statement in the fall that

we have up to a two-year waiting list for assessments to be performed in this province. So that comes under our bailiwick, within reason. There are some exceptions to that.

Mr. R. Brown: So are our counsellors also teaching, are you saying?

June Sanderson: They are. They are also teaching, in many cases, not in all cases.

Mr. R. Brown: What kind of teaching are they doing? I mean, percentage-wise? How much are they taking out of their job?

June Sanderson: It varies. Not only are they - okay, so that would vary, Richard, and I don't want to say that, but they would be teaching - up to 50% of their time would be taken out in teaching. But another issue is that some of them travel between up to four schools so they'd be in - so you might get to a school one week and you wouldn't be back to it, you know, you'd only be there for one day in a cycle and that's a fairly common and probably necessary practice. But it certainly compromises their ability to be effective in their base schools.

Mr. R. Brown: So do they get together and discuss counselling functions as a PD day?

June Sanderson: On the PD days, which are as you know in - they take many forms. So we're through the PEI TF. We're through our boards. We're through the department. We have many options for professional development. Oftentimes the professional development that's provided on those days is more relevant for the teachers, right? But I work really hard to put together professional development that connects back into this topic.

As a matter of fact, on February 3rd we had concerned children's advertisers here doing a morning on the whole - the broader topic of bullying. One piece of that was electronic

bullying, and pulled in our local people to do an add-on on what's happening in the province on that. So yes, we do get together and try to come up with strategies to deal with these issues.

Mr. R. Brown: Someone else has a question.

Chair: You go ahead, yes, David McKenna.

Dr. McKenna: Actually, you kind of stole my question there too. I was just curious on how much education you were getting, all the social workers getting, on cyber-bullying, if it's - you know, because it's a fairly new topic, as you indicated. Is there an opportunity during the year to be updated on this type of issue? You know, what's working in other provinces that we maybe could be trying here. Because I assume you speak across the country what they're doing out there. Because I know I went to something in the summer in Newfoundland and there was talk about a lot of bullying going on in different provinces, different strategies they're all starting to look at, and I was wondering if it's something you do all across the country here as well.

June Sanderson: We do. We try, but if you heard of contacts too - if you are somewhere, any of you that hear of or get an idea and you feel like it might be relevant for schools to know, you know, we'd certainly welcome all actions.

But we have done pretty well with putting together - the peaceful schools initiative has been very successful here but we're going through - you know, we need to go through - it's like everything, right? We go through waves and we're coming back up again on another, I guess, a peaked awareness on the prevalence of this issue. CBC had an article on - it was February 17th - I forgot about that - with a boy that was stabbed as a result of an Internet bullying incident in New

Brunswick just a few days ago.

So you know, these incidents are - when those high-end incidents come up, of course, it reminds us that we need to, once again, respond to the challenges.

Dr. McKenna: Just -

Chair: Go ahead, David.

Dr. McKenna: There's an article in the *Journal-Pioneer*, I think it was either yesterday or the day before, on the front page. I happened to look at it. It talked about a 2004 study of students in grades 4 to 8, and it said 35% of the kids said they were threatened online. I thought that was pretty high. But I guess that's reality out there. It just amazes me. That's getting down to the lower grades, even 4 to 8. I know certainly, in grade 4, I'm not sure how many kids would be using the MSN messaging or whatever you call it, but I guess it's more than I think it is out there. So it seems like - if that's back in 2004, it's probably even worse today.

June Sanderson: That's right.

Dr. McKenna: It's alarming.

June Sanderson: It is alarming.

Dr. McKenna: I don't know how we're going to get a hand on it. I mean, I know MSN is on at our house all the time. As soon as you walk into the room the kids just - the screen switches.

Mr. R. Brown: What if they have a contract?

Dr. McKenna: Yeah, well, the contract's just with the school though, isn't it?

June Sanderson: Yes, it is.

Dr. McKenna: I mean, what -

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct).

Dr. McKenna: - yes, that is the question I have. What about a contract for home? Is there such an idea we can do that at home? Is there something that we can follow up on that?

June Sanderson: You know, I was thinking about that this morning too. I thank you for inviting me. Because what it has done is forced me to sort of get a little more with this in my foreground in my job description as well. But we're thinking this morning, Julie and I were talking about that, if it was possible for even new computer purchases that there be an hour of education could go into a home as a result of that computer purchase. That I would have someone come in and show me: How do I see the sites my children were on previously, you know, over the last week? How do I check what they're saying on their MSN messaging? How do I put in a net nanny or something that's going to filter out what I don't want coming in?

But I would need to have that right in my home with my computer, because I find when I go to education sessions on this, which I do, I get back home and I'm not confident enough technologically to get on and do the things that I feel would be in the best interests of my own children.

Dr. McKenna: (Indistinct) schedule for you.

Chair: I wonder though -

June Sanderson: Pardon me?

Dr. McKenna: (Indistinct).

June Sanderson: I'm not good at that.

Chair: - just if I could interject on that matter. It sounds like it might be an interesting topic for some community school to take on in terms of getting parents out there and involved. We have a lot of

computer program courses there now.

June Sanderson: Definitely.

Chair: But something specialized like that for parents who want to be able to understand what their children are up to could prove very popular.

I'm going to turn things over to Wilbur MacDonald and then Minister MacFadyen.

Mr. MacDonald: I'd like to ask you, Julie, a few questions. There seems to be a big gap between the student and the parents, and maybe even the teachers, knowing what's happening, and it's particularly the parents. I think you've indicated that. Now, when a student - you know, I mean - a number of phone calls over the last 20 years or so that are devastating if you're not used to it.

So if a student gets something on an e-mail that, you know, cuts them down or whatever you want to call it, it must be devastating to the student. But how and why does - most of the examples that we've read or heard about, there seems to be a continuing dialogue between the student and an adult or a student and somebody else. Why do the young people continue to associate by e-mail or whatever way they do it with people who are bullying them or who are trying to coerce them into going someplace? How do you stop that? Is that not one of the major problems that we have?

Julie Matheson: Kids use the Internet but they don't really take it that seriously. If a student were being attacked in person, then they would know how to deal with that. They're well educated on that. But when someone is attacking them online they don't often take it as seriously as they probably should. They're just letting themselves be hurt and not responding. They don't always think of how to get themselves out of that situation.

We often only understand how to do the things that we like to do online and don't have a very good understanding of how we can use it to establish controls like spam blocks and how to block certain e-mail addresses. Then the text messaging thing, most students don't realize how easy it would probably be to change your phone number or try to remove that kind of threat.

They're not really that well educated on the fact that this is a serious thing, that just because it's not an actual person-to-person thing that it still counts and they need to learn that. They need to understand more that it is a serious problem, I think.

Mr. MacDonald: We often hear about a child being bullied in the school and that person seems to be a loner, you'd read, as I'm only going with by what I read. Does the same situation occur in cyber-bullying? That the person is kind of shut off from other students or not got friends that they -

Julie Matheson: It often does because they don't have the support network that they need to have someone to go to, but it isn't always that way. The reason I think that a lot of loner-type people are bullied in person is that they're alone. They're not seen to have anyone to defend them to kind of take their side. When you're online you're usually by yourself, so everyone is kind of put in more of a loner position. So it's easier to attack anyone, not just someone that you would feel is that way. Normally, socially, it is a social, like, status neutralizer, like Ms. Sanderson said.

Mr. MacDonald: I see. What would you do if you had the ability to correct this situation? What things would you do to correct it?

Julie Matheson: I think the most important part is education, teaching everyone about how to deal with the situation, what it is. Everybody involved needs to understand and

learn more, students and parents and educators.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you.

Chair: Minister MacFadyen.

Mr. MacFadyen: I guess, in regards to today's technologies, as you say, you never know what's on the other end or who's on the other end. I guess my concern would be that I wonder, first of all, what programs are offered in the school in regards to education relating to the kids to know that if a message comes through and they don't know who the sender is, why do kids not reject that message and not continue on with the conversation?

Like, if somebody sends me something in an e-mail and I don't know the individual, I don't even bother opening it. I'm wondering, from the school's perspective, is there much education in regards to the use of the Internet and how kids can be more familiar with what's happening in today's technology?

The second part that I have is in relation to parents. Like, you talked about putting together an agreement with kids in regards to the use of the Internet. How do you get parents convinced that there is a problem in regards to the Internet usage in regards to cyber-bullying?

June Sanderson: On the first issue, as I mentioned, there are three presentations available in the schools through the department, through media - they're called media literacy. They're excellent. The department has also offered support to do the in-servicing with the teachers on that piece and some of that has already happened.

Included in the health curriculum at all levels there's a piece on how to respond to bullying, and the other piece is on how to

solve problems, right?, which is very important to know what you do when you get into a situation that you're uncomfortable with. There's a problem-solving model in all health curriculum, even now, and that will continue to be the same.

So certainly the schools are doing quite a bit to respond to this, but what's enough? We don't know, you know, because the use of electronic media is just growing exponentially. So even when David was saying there, the 2004 stats wouldn't be anything like the 2006 stats. It would be just exponential, I would think.

So we are doing a lot. Are we doing enough? I don't know. There's so much being - we can't do more. We can only take the same number of hours and do things differently within them. What should those changes be? We're constantly working on that. So I think that mentoring piece is a big one and the connection between school and community is very important. As I said before, each student and their parents sign an Internet usage agreement prior to the start, right at the first of the school year before they're ever allowed into a computer lab or anywhere near it.

So there are a lot of things in place now, but it's a humbling experience to be in front of this kind of an issue.

Mr. MacFadyen: I guess the other part that I would wonder, too, in relation to - like you talk about the number of counsellors that are in the system, I think you said 50 to 55, and the ratio was 1:400.

June Sanderson: The ratio is not 1:400. The department have funded to that, but it's being - that whole rollover in terms of staffing hasn't quite happened yet. So we're not - I don't want to be quoted on saying that it translates into 1:400 in the schools.

Mr. MacFadyen: But not only does the counsellor work with a student who may be having a problem, the home room teacher would probably be aware of issues or concerns. It may not be the counsellor, it maybe the teacher that works with the child that's having the difficulty.

June Sanderson: That's right, yeah.

Chair: Robert Ghiz.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. What are the rules currently under cell phone usage in schools?

June Sanderson: I think it varies. You know, I'd like to know that too, but it varies. It would depend on the school. Some schools, the students wouldn't have access to. It would vary right now.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

June Sanderson: I don't think there's a consolidated approach to that and I think there would be varying reasons, you know. There's pros and cons, right? So there would not be a consolidated approach to that issue right now.

Leader of the Opposition: Because, you know, I don't really see use of a student having a cell phone in the school. Perhaps when they walk out of the school. Within the school there are phones in the schools. Especially if you're in a classroom now, I take it, you could hide under your desk and do MSNing or whatever, along those lines. Do you think limiting cell phone usage in the schools would be one recommendation?

June Sanderson: Well, I do. Now, let's hear from Julie on that one too, though, she's -

Julie Matheson: At my school the rules regarding cell phones really tend to vary depending on the teacher. Some teachers are

really strict about it. If a cell phone were to go off in their class, you would not want that to happen. But others, occasionally there's like a cell phone ringing in the class. People constantly have them on. They could be text messaging, for all people know. The only time they tend to get really strict is when we're having exams and then the teachers confiscate them before the exam and then we get them back after.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) if they get their questions and that (Indistinct) that one in there.

Leader of the Opposition: I personally think, like you, that we shouldn't have cell phones, especially in classrooms. They should be off, and even in the school, you know, why do you have to be calling somebody? It should be once you step outside the school doors, I guess, that they should be used.

I find that, I think myself, too, I see education as the key. The other thing, you know, I could imagine a parent - David was surprised with someone in grade 4 MSNing or on the computer, you know. If you think about it, too, it's also educational to have someone in grade 4 -

June Sanderson: That's right.

Leader of the Opposition: - a ten-year old on there typing messages back and forth. They're learning, reading, writing, spelling. I guess some people say it's not that good because there's all those little phrases that they use to shorten things up, but it's still good to see them doing that. So I guess we have to find a balance between the educational aspect of MSN and message boards and all that stuff with the bullying factor as well. I think I agree with you very much that it is an educational aspect.

Right now, are there - like, I know there are some days when, you know, there'll be a

rally at the school and they talk about bullying. Or I hope there are anyway, I remember that when I was in school. Are there people who come in and talk about cyber-bullying now to students?

June Sanderson: The RCMP, and I know you are having a presentation from the RCMP, they will speak to that, and maybe, is there anyone else from the department doing a presentation? Is Lana -

Clerk of Committees: Yes, she is (Indistinct).

June Sanderson: Yes, so you will hear a lot more about that side of things, and in Lana's presentation, you will hear the incidence of pre-schoolers using this form of communication.

But I agree with you, Robert, in terms of - it's a reality that we need to be able to communicate this way and it's the primary form of sharing information, right?, and it's wonderful. But at the same time it's coming with a flip side, right? So we always have to be aware of the balance, and I agree. So we don't want to look at it in a totally negative way, the use of electronic supports. It's just that this is a piece of it that's very negative.

Leader of the Opposition: The other thing that I just wanted to mention was the kids today are smarter than the parents when it comes to computers.

June Sanderson: That's right.

Leader of the Opposition: Even if you teach them, like I know I've got friends that are much better at the computer than I am, and you know, in terms of going in and looking at their last sites, they know how to delete all that stuff and move it around so that you can never -

June Sanderson: Yeah, exactly.

Leader of the Opposition: - find it. So I think it is good to do those things. But the students are just going to get one step in front of the parents anyway. I think it comes down to a lot of the education and making sure that they realize the hurtfulness of what, in fact, they are doing.

June Sanderson: Yeah.

Chair: Wes MacAleer.

Mr. MacAleer: I'm trying to paint a picture here of who needs sort of the help or who are we trying to influence here. I'm assuming it's youth. I would rather think that it's just not the loners but there's youth in a broad spectrum who are involved in the Internet and use the Internet, etc.

June Sanderson: That's right.

Mr. MacAleer: So if we're going to use an electronic means to get information to these people, is the medium the message here? I know that smacks of Marshall McLuhan. But are we restricted, then, in getting our message to people who need the message, i.e., anti-bullying and good behaviour, etc., using the Internet? My real question is this: there's a need to create a sense of community here among youth.

June Sanderson: That's right.

Mr. MacAleer: You know, we used to think it used to be dances at the local club or whatever. Now it seems that people are much more comfortable about sitting in their own home, maybe, and putting their contacts through a telephone wire or whatever. So what I'm getting at here is, you know, on TV, for example, we have an example of a number of help programs, whether it's controlling your finances or sex education, etc. There are a number of people who have these shows.

In our community we don't have the access

to television on that scale. But we do have access to radio. I'm wondering: Is one of the ways in which we can get to youth is, you know, a self-help program through a radio program? That would be my first question, and if it is or isn't. If it is a methodology that can be applied, you know, what time of the day - do youth listen to the radio? Is this a medium that we can get to people, or do they just watch television? Is the Internet the only way that we can get through to youth other than personal contact?

June Sanderson: Are we talking about a phone in?

Mr. MacAleer: Yes, a phone-in.

June Sanderson: Like *Frasier*.

Mr. MacAleer: Yes.

June Sanderson: Let's defer to Julie.

Mr. MacAleer: Is that a seed that we can plant in the community and somebody might take it up? Where youth phone in - it's a very public thing, because people are obviously probably going to have to speak into the program and as a result people may know who they are. But is that an impossible task in terms of getting people to participate?

Julie Matheson: I think that, like anything, would work for some people. Some people would participate in it but then others wouldn't. I don't really know that that many teenagers tend to listen to self-help programs, but you never know, if something like that was put out then they might. Most people that I know just listen to the radio in the background when they want music. But it's always a possibility.

Mr. MacAleer: They wouldn't necessarily phone in to gain help or to provide information that may help other people. What do you think?

Julie Matheson: Most people my age aren't really that familiar with that as a medium of gaining help.

Mr. MacAleer: Okay.

Julie Matheson: They'd be more used to kind of even just writing into a magazine, but they'd often just do that on line, or email a teen-help site or ask a counsellor. I don't think that self-help radio shows are really all that common or popular in a way that they know about them or use them.

Mr. MacAleer: Okay. So if you had a program after midnight -

Mr. R. Brown: You're watching too much late night television.

June Sanderson: I maybe should say -

Mr. MacAleer: I'm trying to find a solution here as opposed to finding what the problem is, because I think we all know what the problem is, to try to create some form of assistance to people who need it.

June Sanderson: And we need to be creative in our approaches, and to link into what youth are using as their communication method. We need to hook into them.

I should say too that the Kids Help Phone have a wonderful existence and we have our own Help Phone in this province. Thank you for that. The Kids Help Phone are coming into the province probably on April 7th to train student ambassadors in the junior highs and we're doing a pilot in the east right now. That will be backed up with a workshop on bullying for a few of them, and that will be networked back into the student body through their peers. They have, you know, exceptional skills in terms of delivering student leadership programs and addressing social issues.

Mr. MacAleer: Are we hearing from the

Help Phone people involved in our discussions here?

June Sanderson: No. There's no one in this province.

Chair: Richard Brown.

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you. I want to thank you for your candour here, too. Wes said the Kids Help Line. Do we have stats on that? How many calls and kids using it?

June Sanderson: We know that in this province, to the Kids Help Phone, which is a national help line -

Mr. R. Brown: Oh.

June Sanderson: Yeah, it's the national one, it's - Kids Help Phone. Coming out of this province there are approximately 3,000 calls annually from the kids. That's last year's stat. But Bell Canada comes out with stats. It's an anonymous confidential line so they get their stats by looking at not the 902 but on the next three numbers of the calls that come in and can identify then and give that back. They're coming from 25 communities in this province.

Mr. R. Brown: Do you get those stats broken down by community and everything?

June Sanderson: No, we don't know which communities. We only know 25 communities.

Mr. R. Brown: So do you know - like, do they, as you as a coordinator -

June Sanderson: No. I really don't have any responsibility for the Kids Help Phone except that I think it's a wonderful program and I'm trying to help them get into the schools here.

Mr. R. Brown: Okay, but as a national help line, we get 3,000 calls here on PEI,

shouldn't the department be taking a look at those stats and seeing where they are or what the calls are and communicating those calls? I'm not saying - I'm not George Bush. I don't want to listen in on them or anything. But to be able to say these calls are coming from these communities, these are the type of calls, and for the Department of Education to say: Here's the stats we're having. Giving that back to the counsellors province-wide so the counsellors can say: Okay, am I effective in what I'm doing? You know, my area is getting 1,000 calls. Do they rank them or some sort of stats be able to tell us -

June Sanderson: We know that the calls that are recorded are not ones that are pranks or that are calling just for the sake of having someone to talk to.

Mr. R. Brown: No, no.

June Sanderson: They're calling with issues, but we don't get presented with what the issues are. But that kind of data does go out to the counsellors now, Richard. So we do do a decent job of that. But it doesn't just come under education either, right? This is a community responsibility and we can't keep putting everything back into the schools either, right. So there are some other factors that need to be included here.

Mr. R. Brown: I guess I'm concerned today, like we have in the paper today, there's a youth in court for attacking a fellow student with a knife just here on PEI in Summerside. We talk about - is it escalating? I think it is escalating. Also I'm hearing rumours about this case out in - the basketball team. If they're true, that's pretty bad stuff. It's got to the point now that we've got a major problem here on PEI in this area and it has to be addressed. You got kids going to school with knives nowadays. Maybe it could have been a gun if it wasn't for the gun laws we have in this country. That's a pretty sad story. I hope you all read

it there this morning where the young fellow just said: Look, I'm just too small, I don't have the muscles, I've got to protect myself.

I'm not blaming the schools here. I'm just saying: How did that situation get to that case where a child in one of our schools has to take a knife to school? Are we going to be like Detroit where we're going to have to have metal detectors pretty soon at the gates? We may say: That's an isolated instance. Well, is it? I don't know.

On a case like this, I know in the States there they have some web sites in some of the states or in some of the school districts and that where kids can go in and anonymously put they were bullied at this time and this time, and it's anonymous. I guess it's like the RCMP line.

June Sanderson: Crime Stoppers.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes, TIPS. At least it's an indication to the people in charge that, hey, these things are coming down. Because if you're being bullied, first of all you're not going to tell people you're being bullied because you're at the threat of being exposed, and then the bullying just gets worse on you. I guess with cyber-bullying today - in the old days when a group of kids got together and one kid was bullying another kid, there was always somebody in the group, hopefully - I know hopefully in our groups - that'd go to the guy and say: Look, that's stupid. Leave the young fellow alone or leave the young person alone. In cyber-bullying there's no peer group to tell that person, to say: Hey, you're going a little too far here.

I see an escalation through MSN because now they have nobody to tell them. Like, I've done it myself, you know, where some kids were bullying another kid. I'm not saying I was - you know, you just go over and say to the bully: Hey, enough's enough. I don't mind having a bit of teasing but -

June Sanderson: Maybe just to respond to that. You know, certainly that's the whole thing, is that it is different and that it is more difficult to deal with the bully per se, but the bystander is still seen to be the most powerful person there. Still the bystander, if we empower the person that's being abused to tell someone else, then we hope that the person that listens has the skills to help that person to get out of the situation or keep it from getting worse.

Chair: Ms. Sanderson, I appreciate that. I'm going to suspend - one final quick question from Minister MacFadyen and then we're going to have to wrap things up because we have a number of other things.

Mr. MacFadyen: Just curious. You said that on the Kid Help Line, it's a national line that's used.

June Sanderson: Yes it is, yeah.

Mr. MacFadyen: I'm surprised that if an issue is identified by a young person, that that information is not available to know what the concern or issue is so that people can identify what the priority items are that people need to work with in kids that are having problems.

June Sanderson: Those students are referred back locally. So they'd be referred back into the province for counselling help and so on. So that's in place. It's being a little minimalist I think to view it that way. That's the whole purpose of these lines is that they can call in confidentially and anonymously. If everything was going to be found out about those calls, the kids wouldn't make the calls. Their success is based on that and they do receive help and they've had tremendous success by the way that they're handled.

Mr. MacFadyen: But the information is that if I'm a youth and I call into that line, my concern or issue is - I don't have to

know who's calling - but the concern - someone is getting that information in order to deal with the issue here locally.

June Sanderson: Yes.

Chair: All right. June and Julie, thank you very much for your presentation and for answering all of our questions so thoroughly today. We appreciate it.

June Sanderson: Thank you.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Members, we're now going to move on to the next item on the agenda and for this we're going to rely a great deal upon our Clerk whose done a lot of work here on our behalf in scanning the schools across Prince Edward Island. I believe Marian is now distributing the responses to our call for public input on this issue from the various schools. If you want, maybe we should take a five-minute break, if that's okay, so people can review this information. Would that be okay? We'll hit the gavel again at 11:05 on the clock. Okay. Good.

[There was a brief recess]

Chair: Okay, our Committee's back in session.

I'm going to ask our Clerk of Committees, Marian, if she'd give us a short summary of this document that we've had just a brief opportunity to peruse.

Clerk of Committees: All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As you know, at the last meeting the Committee asked me to contact some businesses and also Island high schools and junior highs to ask what they felt about the problem of cyber-bullying and get their comments.

I contacted the school boards and they actually wanted to extend it into elementary schools, and so that's why you have some responses from elementary schools here. They also gave me the suggestion that I formulate a series of questions and so there would sort of a consistent response or a framework for the principals and teachers to work with. You have a copy of that in front of you as well. They also went to the schools, the Western, the Eastern, the French School Board, the Full Circle, Grace Christian, and I believe there was one other school, another independent school, but it's in the list here. Eighteen responses, which is a reasonable response, and they are all attached just as I received them.

Secondly, I sent the correspondence with essentially the same questions to Aliant, East Link and ITAP. I did not get a response from them and yesterday I confirmed with ITAP, because I thought their members would be interested in this, and unfortunately that's not the case. They said it's not really on their radar screen.

The advertisement that was in the paper, that you approved at the last meeting, also got a minimal response. The Home and School Association responded. They're going to be presenting to us at our next meeting. An individual responded that he would be interested in setting up some sort of a website that might be a help to students and I think it's his business. It's a commercial enterprise that he's interested in. His response is attached to your package as well.

Chair: Thank you very much, Marian.

I know that members will want to take this document and at their leisure read over these remarks from the respondents. Is there any quick discussion that people would like to have on it at this juncture? We'll entertain that. David McKenna.

Dr. McKenna: I just noticed that some of

the larger schools didn't respond in the city area, here like Stonepark, Birchwood, Queen Charlotte and East Wilshire. Pretty large populations, and we didn't have a response from them at all. I was kind of surprised at that. Because I'm surprised at the responses that it doesn't seem to be on the radar screen at all either for most of the schools.

Chair: I would add to that Aliant and East Link in particular, as major service providers of the Internet on Prince Edward Island, that they wouldn't at least have something to say on this matter.

Any further discussion?

We'll leave it there for now and we will mention, and I'll mention this later as well, but it's on your agenda, our next meeting is for Thursday, March 9, at which time we'll have further presentations on this issue. We heard this morning the RCMP will be here. Who else will be here, Marian?

Clerk of Committees: I did hear back from several schools, and I think they mention it in their responses, that they've had an RCMP officer out to talk about safe Internet use. All the schools just were so pleased and enthusiastic about this individual that I invited him in. It's Don Crozier from the RCMP. So we will be receiving essentially the same presentation which I think will, you know, answer a lot of questions.

We're going to be hearing from the representative of the Home and School Association, as I mentioned previously, and also Lana MacIsaac is going to be making a presentation. She is - I'm not sure of her exact title - but information technology facilitator within the provincial Department of Education.

Chair: All right. Marian, thank you very much. Is there any further discussion or ideas that people would like to put forward at this point in the meeting regarding our

upcoming next meeting on March 9th? Is there anything anyone else wants to say about, I guess, adding to this discussion of cyber-bullying at this stage or are we happy to go with the 9th with what we have?
Wilbur MacDonald.

Mr. MacDonald: I'd like to see a few more teenagers come in. They seem to be the ones that know what's going on here, and know more about it than adults. If we could get a couple of representatives from high schools, say in the city. You know, they wouldn't be far away, that they could come. I think they're the experts, from what we've seen. They're the experts. For example, I'm very poor on anything like that. They seem to have more -

Chair: A point well taken though, and maybe the coverage of today's hearings - I noticed the *Guardian* representative was here - maybe that'll spur on some further discussion. It always helps a lot.

We're going to move on to the next issue, number three on our agenda, deferred debate on ambulance services motion moved by Mr. Ghiz on the 12th of January.

Clerk of Committees: It's attached to the agenda.

Chair: And it is attached to the agenda, thank you.

One of the things I wanted to mention before we deal with this is there's a very similar motion that is now before the House - Motion No. 5 - again put forward by the hon. Leader of the Opposition dealing with ambulance services. You know, one would think that this could be an opportunity for the House to comment on this and all members to get involved in a debate on this, and certainly acting on instructions from the Legislature, this Committee could delve into any mandate that the Legislature deems that this Committee ought to do so.

Also this morning it's come to my attention that we have a Memorandum of Understanding for ambulance service that's been reached with the emergency medical care, the EMC Blue Cross here on Prince Edward Island. This is the first major hurdle here towards what everyone knows is going to be sort of a whole new regime of ambulance service on the first of April.

So in some ways, it's my feeling that maybe many of the therefore be it resolves of this resolution are somewhat moot at this point in time. I don't know. Does the Committee want to entertain a debate on this motion today?

Leader of the Opposition: I'd just like to say that this motion was brought forward on January 12th, and I'm sure like every other member here the ambulance debate has been a big issue recently. I know I've had many calls. I've had many meetings on it. A lot of people in the communities are very upset that they have not been consulted on a new system: what the system would look like, where the ambulances are situated, what the first response is going to be, whether or not it's for firefighters, fire departments that do a lot of first response. I think it would be a good opportunity to allow some of these organizations to have their voices heard.

It's unfortunate here that the unions brought forward a proposal to government in early January for the review of a public system, and they had a meeting with them on I think the 26th, and on the 27th they decided that they were going with the private system.

So really this whole effort on the part of government has been rushed. Consultation has not been done. Wherever I've been, at any meeting, that is brought up. I think as Members of the Legislative Assembly representing the people of Prince Edward Island we should make sure that some of these people have the opportunity to have their voices heard.

So I hope that we can actually open up some hearings here and allow any organization to make a presentation on private versus public, and on exactly how they think the ambulance system in Prince Edward Island should work.

Chair: Any further discussion on whether we should consider this motion today?

Minister MacFadyen.

Mr. MacFadyen: I just think that - and I'm not speaking because I'm a member of Cabinet - but I've read the newspaper in regards to letters to the editor in regards to concerns, both positive and negative, and I believe that government is moving in the direction that they said they would.

I don't see the need of having hearings to hear concerns in regards to whether it should be a public service or whether it should be the direction that government's going. I think that they have entered into an agreement with EMC Blue Cross. According to the news release they're in the process now of negotiating, I guess, the purchase of assets and the hiring of staff. I believe that that process will be continued. I don't know what we will end up with, but I would say that the agreement in regards to providing the services has been accepted by the province because they're into the next stage of the agreement.

Chair: All right. Richard Brown, then David McKenna.

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

It's a funny thing. We had public meetings into windmills, you know, all over the Island. You know, MLAs are holding public meetings into windmills, up in Souris and up west, but we can't have public meetings into our ambulatory system on Prince Edward Island. We will ask people about, you know: Should we have windmills or should we not

have windmills, and where should we have them? But we'll not ask the public what kind of ambulatory system you want in place for your health care system. I find that kind of ironic.

Also, that the government indicated earlier on this ambulatory system, CUPE or the unions have said, you know: We should look at a public auction or a public system here, run and totally integrated with our health care system. At that time they were told: Put a proposal together and put it in. They, in good faith, went ahead, prepared a proposal, put it in. I guess they were never responded to on their public proposal, on what government thought of it. That disturbs me.

We also talk about public versus private, you know -

Chair: May I interject just for a moment, Mr. Brown? Because the nature of this discussion now, I prefaced it by saying: Do we want to discuss whether or not we want to consider this motion today in terms of whether or not we should proceed to debate on that?

Mr. R. Brown: We are.

Chair: You're debating it now, and I'm wondering is it something that we, given this fact that there is a motion already by the opposition before the Legislature related to this whole issue that hasn't been called yet, the members haven't had an opportunity to debate, and given the fact that we already had a memorandum of understanding having been signed this morning with EMC Blue Cross, whether or not it is pertinent at this stage of the game to debate this motion? That's the question I'm posing.

Mr. R. Brown: I agree, Mr. Chairman, but the Premier also signed a memorandum with Steven Harper on child care and he's willing to break that pretty quick with this child care deal. So what, he signed a memorandum

with this group? There's still opportunity for us to have input and, you know, if he and Steven Harper can break memorandums of agreement with the children of Prince Edward Island, I see no reason why we can't take a second look at this one.

You know, again - I want to reiterate here to the members of this Committee - we've gone out, asked public input into GMOs and a number of issues. We're out talking about ATVs right now. We want public consultation into this. But a system so close to Islander's hearts, our health care system, when an emergency occurs in a household, you know, that is more important than anything. For us not to be asking the public which it is their system now, it's not government's system - all of a sudden it seems that government owns this system; it is owned by the people of Prince Edward Island - that we do not want to hear from the people that use this system.

I'd like to hear from people and say - like, there was letter to the editor there this morning in the paper. A person went in the emergency room and waited half a day or a day almost to get serviced. There are major problems out here, and I don't know why we continue to go off on different tangents on public input, but on the most important issue facing Islanders in all surveys across this country, which is our health care system - and Islanders and Canadians have said time and time again this is the number one issue in Canada and this is the number one issue on Prince Edward Island - why are we so afraid to go back to the public and say to the public: It is your number one concern. Where should we improve it? What should we do here?

That concerns me. Because this ambulatory care service: Should it be fully integrated with the hospitals? Should the ambulances be right at the emergency rooms? I don't know. But I'd like to hear from the Medical Society. I'd like to hear from the medical

people. I'd like to hear from the people that provide the paramedic association and say: Look, maybe this should be fully integrated with our medical system. As the Premier has said time and time again, health care starts when the paramedic enters the home.

Chair: Question again to the Committee members. Is it the wish of the Committee that we debate or defer this motion?

Leader of the Opposition: Yes, Mr. Chair, I believe that this is a vitally important issue. It's already been put off -

Chair: I take it you're in favour -

Leader of the Opposition: - for over a month.

Chair: You're in favour of debating the motion.

Leader of the Opposition: Well, we are debating the motion because it's on the agenda. You just can't keep putting something off forever. I don't understand what you're trying to do here. Why will you not allow this motion to be even debated or voted on? Do you have something to hide here?

Chair: No, absolutely not.

Leader of the Opposition: This is an important issue for Islanders. We've seen a lot of debate on this. There's firefighters all across this province that have not been consulted. We see letters to the editor from emergency room doctors in this province, the people that are dealing with the ambulance systems, that have not been consulted. This is a major issue for the people of Prince Edward Island. We see emergency rooms being closed down across this province. Ambulance services are going to be that much more important.

There's also a motion here calling for this

standing committee to recommend to the government that the \$150 fee be dropped. That's another important issue that I believe has to be addressed.

Mr. Chairman, you've already put this off, this Committee, for more than a month. It's time that we moved forward and started working for Islanders.

Chair: Is it the wish - David McKenna.

Dr. McKenna: I just want to refer back to Motion No. 5 that was brought up in the House last fall, and the things in your therefore be it resolved that the hon. Robert Ghiz and Richard Brown ask for are actually happening today. You asked that the government undertake a review of ambulance services. They have done that.

Leader of the Opposition: Where?

Dr. McKenna: They're doing it.

Mr. R. Brown: Where?

Leader of the Opposition: Where?

Dr. McKenna: That's why they looked at the central dispatch system. They looked at better levels of advance care.

Leader of the Opposition: There's been no review though.

Chair: Mr. McKenna has the floor please.

Dr. McKenna: I have the floor. And they're supposed to make recommendations to enhance the system we have on PEI. They've done that. Also, they asked to look at - compare the privately operated versus public. I think that has been done as well.

Leader of the Opposition: Ask the users if that's been done.

Dr. McKenna: Apparently it has been done

and I think they found out that -

Mr. MacFadyen: They said they evaluated it.

Dr. McKenna: The evaluation has been done by the department and the numbers indicate that the system we have right now would be the best, the most affordable system for the province.

This is what you asked for. It was done. So I don't know why we want to debate it any further if that's already been happening. We have a Memorandum of Understanding that came out I think today, that I just got a copy of here. So I don't know what else we can gain from it. We're trying to enhance the system, we're trying to make a better system. You asked for a central dispatch system. The paramedics asked for a central dispatch system.

Mr. R. Brown: We don't know where it is.

Dr. McKenna: It's coming. It's what we're looking at. I think government has acted. Let's give it time. Let it unfold. I think the process is working out very well. I have had nothing but good comments on it.

So I don't see what we're going to gain by debating this motion any further until the system - because I think it's happening. It's already happening in the province.

Leader of the Opposition: So you're against this motion, then?

Dr. McKenna: I don't see -

Leader of the Opposition: You're against consulting with the people.

Dr. McKenna: We already have consulted. This has been -

Leader of the Opposition: Who has consulted?

Dr. McKenna: This is not something that happens overnight.

Leader of the Opposition: Explain to me what consultation has been done.

Chair: All right, Mr. Ghiz, one moment please.

Dr. McKenna: This process is not something that happened overnight, Robert. This has been going for a number of years with the ambulance service on PEI. We've been trying to rationalize this service, looking at the emergency rooms across the province. This isn't something that we dreamed up yesterday. This happened for a number of years to enhance the system.

Leader of the Opposition: So you've (Indistinct) to close down emergency hospitals here in Prince Edward Island -

Dr. McKenna: We're trying to enhance health care across the province.

Leader of the Opposition: - according to what you just said.

Chair: Okay, one at a time, members please. One at a time.

Dr. McKenna: I'm not in favour of -

Chair: Mr. McKenna has the floor for the moment, please. Thank you.

Dr. McKenna: Anyway, I'm saying I'm not in favour of this motion right now. That's my -

Mr. MacFadyen: I move that we defer this motion again until the next meeting.

Leader of the Opposition: But you're losing time here.

Mr. MacFadyen: I have the floor, hon. member.

Leader of the Opposition: I don't care. You're losing time here.

Chair: The Chair does care.

Mr. MacFadyen has the floor, and then we'll turn to you, Mr. Ghiz.

Mr. MacFadyen: I believe that government is following a process. They've evaluated the service, the people that provided the service in the past. It's being looked at by the new Memorandum of Understanding we got today. I believe that we would be undermining the role that was put forward to the Committee that looked at evaluating the service, and I move that the motion that's on the floor be deferred.

Chair: Mr. Ghiz, you wanted to speak.

Leader of the Opposition: There's been no public committee set up to look into this. We need to consult with Islanders. I know that you members here on this Committee, like myself, have been contacted by many people across this province. Whether or not we're talking about firefighters, whether or not we're talking about paramedics, whether or not we're talking about the unions, whether or not we're talking about individuals in rural communities who are worried about losing their emergency care. They've contacted us. They believe that we need consultations done to ensure that a new system that's brought in is going to be reflective of what Islanders want.

But unfortunately that has not taken place. Government is going ahead with this. So what I've heard today is: Don't worry about what's going on, is what people are saying to me. Don't worry about consultation. The government's taking care of it.

Chair: We have a motion on the floor from Minister MacFadyen that we defer discussion on this motion until the call of the Chair. Is that correct? In speaking to that

motion, Richard Brown.

Clerk of Committees: The next meeting is what the minister said.

Chair: To the next meeting, did you say? Pardon me. To the next meeting.

Mr. R. Brown: Sure.

Chair: Mr. Brown.

Mr. R. Brown: I move an amendment to the motion. That government release in the interim, while we're waiting for the next meeting, that government releases all the evaluations that have been done on the public-private sector version.

We heard earlier, Mr. Chairman, the hon. David McKenna said that there has been an evaluation done. I move as a part of this motion that government release that evaluation to the public so the public can see how we've come to that conclusion that we'd rather a privately, outside of the health care - outside of the hospital system - ambulatory care system.

Chair: Further discussion on the amendment to the motion.

Mr. MacAleer.

Mr. MacAleer: Mr. Chairman, my understanding of this issue is that the government, in fact, conducted an economic analysis of this situation and found that the public system could, in fact, be one of the options, but that the current option that's being explored is a much more effective and efficient system.

The opposition does have a point, that government has to be held accountable for its decisions, and I would not want this issue to be sort of swept under the table. I think there is a compromise here, and that is that government should be held accountable and

come forward and explain the reasons for its decision.

So I would support a motion that would have this issue brought back to this Committee, at the call of the Chair, with the understanding that government should be given the opportunity to present its position on this.

Chair: I know we've got a lot of - we have a motion, we had an amendment. Now, you're trying to make another motion here.

Speaking to the amendment to the motion, which is -

Leader of the Opposition: I want to speak to that.

Mr. MacAleer: Well, so - okay.

Chair: Robert Ghiz is going to speak to the amendment to the motion to defer.

Leader of the Opposition: We've heard information today from -

Clerk of Committees: No, that government release the documents.

Chair: Oh, yes. That government release - that's right.

Leader of the Opposition: - members of Executive Council, from members of Cabinet, that there has been a full review done, and we haven't seen anything on this. Since they're making reference to this, I hope that they would forward us that information of this full review that has been done.

Mr. MacFadyen: I never said that Executive Council made recommendations.

Leader of the Opposition: No, no, no. You're a member of Cabinet. I'm just saying that there has been references made here that

there has been a full review done.

Mr. MacFadyen: No, you said members from Executive Council made a reference.

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah. Yeah.

Mr. MacFadyen: I did not make a reference.

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. McKenna is a member of Executive Council.

Mr. MacFadyen: No, he's not.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Leader of the Opposition: Ask him again. He's a member of Executive Council.

Mr. MacFadyen: He's a member of -

Leader of the Opposition: You don't even understand.

Mr. MacFadyen: Just a moment, hon. member -

Leader of the Opposition: No, I have the floor.

Chair: All right. Robert Ghiz.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much.

Chair: Please conclude so Mr. MacFadyen can respond.

Leader of the Opposition: Members of Executive Council, Mr. McKenna, made reference -

Mr. MacFadyen: He's on the committee of Executive Council.

Leader of the Opposition: Yes, he's a member of Executive Council.

Mr. MacFadyen: He doesn't have privy to the decisions made in Executive Council.

Leader of the Opposition: I have the floor anyway.

Chair: All right, Robert Ghiz -

Mr. R. Brown: He does. He's on the third floor.

Chair: - please continue. Mr. MacFadyen, please allow him just a moment.

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. McKenna made reference to a review that has already been done on the ambulance services and I hope that he would table that report that he's made reference to at this Committee.

Chair: Minister MacFadyen.

Mr. MacFadyen: There has been no mention of anything that came from Executive Council. What I said in my remarks earlier in regards to what the committee has done, the committee that I'm referring to is the committee that was given the task of evaluating the responses to the proposals. The responses to the proposals was given to the committee and the committee made a recommendation based on evaluations of various categories within the assessment of each of the proposals.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square made a reference earlier that the Premier - I believe his comments were: broke the contract in regards to child care.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Mr. MacFadyen: He did not. The contract that's signed, it was one year.

Mr. R. Brown: No.

Mr. MacFadyen: And what I am saying is

that there is a process that was put in place in regards to this committee that was struck through the Department of Health to evaluate the proposals that came in. They have been given the task by government and government is proceeding with that manner.

Today they released a press release in regards to a Memorandum of Understanding for ambulance service reached with the emergency medical care. I can't see the sense, as a member here of this Committee, of rehashing what is being done until we hear what is going to be worked out from emergency medical.

Chair: Could the Clerk please repeat the amendment to the motion, please?

Clerk of Committees: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chair: We do have other business we need to get to.

Clerk of Committees: The Committee is now considering Mr. Brown's amendment which would be that this Committee request government that all evaluations be released to the public prior to March 9th, which is the next meeting of this Committee.

The motion by Minister MacFadyen is that the original motion, which was made by Mr. Ghiz on January 12th be deferred again until March 9th. So we have the amendment before us at the moment.

Chair: All those in favour of the amendment, say 'aye.'

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Chair: Contrary, 'nay.'

Mr. MacFadyen: Nay!

Clerk of Committees: We're back to the referral motion now.

Leader of the Opposition: I think we got it. Two ayes and a nay. We got it.

Chair: No. We were on the amendment.

Leader of the Opposition: We got it.

Chair: Richard Brown's amendment. Not the motion.

Clerk of Committees: Mr. Chairman, what was it? The release -

Leader of the Opposition: We won the amendment.

Chair: No, no. It's obvious confusion around the table here, Mr. Ghiz, to people to understand what they're voting on. That's why I wanted to make that repetition. The amendment calls for release of any documentation - is that right? - or studies that have been done?

Leader of the Opposition: We never voted on it.

Clerk of Committees: All evaluations.

Chair: All evaluations, etc., right?

Leader of the Opposition: Why are we having another vote? We just had a vote and it was two to one in favour of releasing it.

Mr. R. Brown: The rest abstained.

Clerk of Committees: Mr. Chairman, you call the vote.

Chair: I call the vote.

Leader of the Opposition: You did call the vote.

Clerk of Committees: You said it was carried or lost. It's your decision.

Chair: It's my decision to say if it was

carried or lost. I want to find out whether people understood what the heck they were voting for.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes, we'd like to know what Executive Council (Indistinct).

Chair: That's why I tried to get a repeat of the amendment.

Now to the amendment of Mr. Brown calling for release of information that may or may not be there, I don't know, yes or no. Those in favour, say 'aye.,

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Chair: Contrary, 'nay.'

Some Hon. Members: Nay!

Chair: The nays have it.

On the motion of Mr. MacFadyen calling for the deferral of discussion on the motion that was before us earlier, of January 12th, those in favour of deferral of the motion to the next meeting, say 'aye.'

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Chair: Contrary, 'nay.'

Some Hon. Members: Nay!

Chair: The 'ayes' have it.

Leader of the Opposition: You just keep deferring. That's the new tactic.

Mr. R. Brown: Is advice (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: Against public consultation.

Chair: I would like to ask Committee members if we could go in camera.

Clerk of Committees: Just ask for a

motion, please.

Chair: Beg your pardon? Ask permission?

Clerk of Committees: Ask for a motion -

Chair: Yes. I'd like a motion to go in camera for discussion of some other matters.

Mr. MacFadyen: So moved. Move in camera.

Chair: So moved by Minister MacFadyen.

All those in favour, say 'aye.'

Committee Members: Aye!

Chair: Contrary, 'nay.'

Good. We're going to take a moment to clear the room.

The Committee moved to in camera

