

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Colin LaVie

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The Legislature sat at 1:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

Welcome back to my colleagues for another day of debate in the Legislature, to all those who are tuned in at home, watching online, and those who have joined us in the public gallery.

I see a couple of familiar faces here: Roxanne Carter-Thompson from the Adventure Group, doing some amazing work at the outreach centre, as well; and Karen Cumberland, who is here representing the PEI Alliance for Mental Well-Being, I think about a year old, now, or close to it. Thank you both for being here. Hope you enjoy the proceedings and thank you for the wonderful work you've been doing on behalf of all Islanders. It's good to see you here.

I want to begin my remarks by recognizing that today, December 1st, is World AIDS Day. It's a day when we unite to show solidarity in the fight against HIV/AIDS. While we're encouraged about the efforts that have been made in the advancement of treatment and the work towards an eventual cure, we also mourn and reflect on those who have lost their lives during this terrible epidemic.

I also want to take the time, and we should take the time, to celebrate the activists who continue to work so hard to bring attention to this HIV/AIDS issue at a time in the not-too-distant past when they were being ignored, or worse, discriminated against. But they continue to promote goodness and kindness.

I think of, here on Prince Edward Island, I see local filmmaker Dave Stewart will release a documentary tonight called *Positive: When HIV/AIDS hit PEI*. That's showing tonight at City Cinema at 7:00 p.m. I know Dave as one of the funniest people in PEI, really. He has a great sense of humour. I sometimes think there aren't enough

people who share the sense of humour that perhaps Dave and me do, but this is a pretty heavy topic he's taken.

But I know Dave, that he will do this well. I see that Troy Perrot-Sanderson, who is someone I went to high school with, is featured in it, as well. If you can get out tonight, please go to attend that. I want to thank the PEERS Alliance for presenting this project tonight and to thank them for their ongoing work to try to reduce the stigma and help those with AIDS and HIV.

I also want to offer my congratulations to the A team, the Senior A boys' team at Ecole-sur-Mer, who, for the second year in a row, have won the PEI School Athletic Association A championship, under the guidance of teacher-coach Austin Stewart. It seems like that small school in Summerside is building a bit of a dynasty. MVP Carson Crawford said it was a great way to finish his school career with back-to-back championships. To all those at Ecole-sur-Mer, I say congratulations and keep up the great work.

I was also interested – someone sent me a text yesterday with a link to CBC to watch a little story called Magic: The Gathering, which featured Wyatt Gillis and Marcus King, who happens to be a nephew of mine. Marcus lives in Charlottetown. I don't get to see him as much, but it was great to see him on TV. Yeah, it was on *Compass*, yeah. It was this game that I don't know much about, but they described it as Dungeons and Dragons meets Texas Hold'em poker. Marcus was one of the people who finished high enough to go to a national championship in Toronto next year. It was a great story. He seemed to know a lot about the game. I said I haven't seen him for a little while but I sent him a note to tell him how articulate he sounded. I thought that maybe there's a brighter future for him somewhere along the way. Congratulations and thanks, CBC and Jane Robertson, for that story.

The Confederation Centre of the Arts announced their new 2023 schedule. *Maggie*, a musical starring Johnny Reid, will be on the mainstage. This is a creation with the team behind *Tell Tale Harbour*, who have done a great job, actually, with that play. I look forward to learning more about

that. There is also the play that, I think it says goes around – I don't know, Mr. Speaker, I can't read my own handwriting. It's *Sherlock Holmes* meets *Monty Python*. Once again, that sounds like it's going to be very interesting.

At the Mack, we have *I'm Every Woman*, which is a review of songs of a number of vocalists, including Aretha Franklin, Dolly Parton, Chaka Khan, Taylor Swift and others.

And I was very happy and surprised and as proud dad moment to see that the Kit Bag Theatre production of *The Songs of Johnny & June*, with Rebecca Parent as director, Melissa MacKenzie, and my own Jacob Hemphill as the lead singer. I saw this production this summer. It's fantastic. I'm proud of Jake and Melissa and Rebecca. It's a great show and good for them to hit the big time. As I say, a proud dad moment in here that I don't get so much time to say, but Jake, you're doing a great job. Melissa, keep it up.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I've seen Jake and Melissa and that show and many other shows and it's absolutely something to be proud of, Premier. You have a wonderful son there with a great voice.

I, too, would like to welcome Roxanne and, also – oh my gosh, sorry – Karen, sorry, Karen – to the Legislature today, and everybody who is watching at home.

I'm sometimes asked what life in the Legislature is like. The Premier just described something as being a combination of Dungeons and Dragons and Texas Hold'em poker. Sometimes, that's what this place feels like. There's some bluffing going on.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Leader of the Opposition: He also said about something else, again, I don't remember what it was, that it was *Sherlock Holmes* meets *Monty Python*, and we have that in here as well. So, it's a strange place to try and capture in words, but every day, I feel blessed to be here and to do the important work that I do with my 26 other colleagues in this Legislative Assembly.

Nature Canada's biodiversity NatureBus tour will be in Charlottetown this Saturday, and they're making their way to Montreal. There's a COP conference there, biodiversity summit, in Montreal from December 7-19th. They're making stops along the way, including one here on Saturday, from 12 noon to 2:00 p.m. at the PEI Farm Centre on University Avenue. It will be, no doubt, a lovely event.

We have COP summits for climate change, of course, we just had one, but this is one on biodiversity. The Charlottetown stop here is hosted by Nature PEI, and it's going to be a family-friendly event with refreshments, information about species at risk, and about conservation organizations on the Island, along with opportunities to sign a postcard to send messages to the elected delegates who will be at COP15 in Montreal.

Of course, there's a whole host of Christmas things upcoming, including one near where I live, in Crapaud. The very merry Christmas is on this weekend on Saturday, with main events on Sunday. A family skate at the rink in Crapaud from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. on Sunday afternoon, which is always well attended. At 6:00 p.m., there's a holiday movie at the community hall. It's a place which has shown movies for a very, very long time, and it's nice when that comes back. There's a lot of other stuff happens, but there will be a movie there at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, and then finally a carol sing and lighting of the Christmas tree on Sunday evening.

Later on tonight, I will be joining a couple of my colleagues, one from Summerside-Wilmot and one from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, at a fundraising event at Backwoods Burger in Tyne Valley, a sold-out fundraising event. I'm really looking forward to that. I'm hoping we finish on time today so we can get up there, and we

will, no doubt, have good company and some lovely food.

Before I sit down, I have no idea what the future holds, of course, but if this should be the last day of the sitting here, I want to thank a few people.

I want to thank the Pages; we have three of the best Pages with us today. Lovely to see you. And the staff of this Legislative Assembly, both those that we see on the floor here, and also those who are working behind the scenes; the researchers and the folks at Hansard and on and on. Thank you for that.

And to yourself, Mr. Speaker, I want to personally thank you for your sage counsel and for your guidance and your fair but firm manner in which you keep this place in order. You sometimes need to enforce yourself, but you do that with a way that allows for flexibility, and therefore for some fun in this place. I think that's why you have the deep respect of every member of this House.

I want to pass on my personal thank you for everything you've done over the years, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: Finally, I'm blessed to work with some wonderful colleagues, both in this House and upstairs on the second floor of this building. We have a small but mighty team up there. People who work extraordinarily hard, are very talented, they're smart, and they have kind hearts. I want to thank each and every one of them for the way that they support the work that we do here in the Legislature. They make it possible for us to have constructive, useful debates here in this Legislative Assembly. Thank you all.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everyone to the gallery. Special welcome to Roxanne and Karen and everyone that's here today.

As the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition alluded to, you know, some days people ask us what's it's like in here. Kind of like the Bugs Bunny cartoon where the sheepdog and the coyote, every day, they go to work and beat each other up and punch out at 4:00 p.m. and say, "Have a good night, see you in the morning."

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gallant: For a new person, it takes some getting used to that, because this kind of a battle, for Question Period especially. As you see the other day there on Tuesday, where we're supposed to be nice to each other, how that changed quite quickly during Question Period.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. Gallant: Anyway, on a serious note, as the Premier mentioned, and the Leader of the Opposition, today is World AIDS Day, a day to remember those who we've lost to the disease and to renew our efforts in not just fighting to end HIV, but to combat the stigma still endured by people living with the disease.

As was mentioned, City Cinema in Charlottetown is presenting a special screening tonight of a documentary on the subject. *Positive: When HIV/AIDS hit PEI* is about how AIDS affected Prince Edward Island when it was still a new disease.

On World AIDS Day, I encourage Islanders to arm themselves with knowledge and work towards reducing stigma associated with this disease.

Also, there is rumour we could be done today. I'm not sure. You never know. But in case we are, I, too, want to thank the Pages for all their hard work; the clerks; yourself, Mr. Speaker; all our colleagues. As I said, we battle it out for a while in the day, but we're all human beings in here and we all get along fairly well outside of here. We see each other at functions and it's a pleasure to go to these functions together. I just wanted to say that.

It's certainly a pleasure to be here and to work with everybody.

Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, I have a few more things I'd like to say. I don't think I'll go past my time.

It was a few weeks before Christmas, and our final days in these seats, with tensions high after a long five weeks. Here is a little poem to help turn down the heat. With your indulgence, let us take pause, to see what's in our MLAs' Christmas lists to dear Santa Claus.

For the Greens, it's simple. They want coal for our landlords and policies implemented no matter the cost, and maybe some answers about the development in Point Deroche.

Santa won't need to look at the list for Charlottetown-Winsloe. You can see it in his glare, and unlike his fellow backbenchers, asking for more hair.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. Gallant: What he wants for Christmas is a turn in a Cabinet chair.

The Minister of Fisheries and Communities is a simple, kind man. You won't find him asking for a government with a plan. Santa knows this minister sure is a boaster, but yesterday, we also learned he cooks a pretty good oyster.

Relaxation and rest is what the health minister needs. That's why he asked for chips, flashlights, and lavender seeds.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gallant: But he will settle for the opposition to not heckle, and for the contractors of the new mental health hospital to step on the pedal.

Premier's list is short; there's only a few. No more pandemics or hurricanes, and maybe a gift card or two.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. Gallant: Don't worry, Mr. Speaker, I didn't forget myself. I'd love to share what Santa could bring that will fill me with glee, and that's a new Liberal government in 2023.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Who's your poet?

Premier King: (Indistinct) in the Sears catalogues.

Speaker: Who's your poet?

Mr. Gallant: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Stop.

Premier King: Well done, well done.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wanted to rise today on World AIDS Day because for a lot of people, we don't have a memory, perhaps a close memory, of what it was like when AIDS became part of our lexicon.

I had a really good friend called David, David McHugh, who spent a number of years in the London Lighthouse, which was the very first centre and hospice dedicated for people with HIV and AIDS in England. It opened in 1986, and when David first became a patient there, I volunteered there as well, and we would hang out and organize parties. There was lots of karaoke, which would make my friends happy, and dancing and costumes.

When David got sicker and became a resident there, I kept volunteering so I could see him because his family wouldn't go. It was a time when, if you had AIDS, people were afraid to touch you. They were afraid to hug somebody or share a toilet in case they caught it.

David, when he passed, which was in December of 1991, he was annoyed because Freddy Mercury died first, and it meant that Freddy Mercury got all the media. He was really annoyed about that. But his family wouldn't come to his funeral, and so a memorial service was held in the garden at

London Lighthouse, and his ashes are still there. That's where he's buried.

I think it's really important that, if you don't – I'm lucky enough to have had David in my life, and he's someone who I really treasure my memory of my life with him, even though it was so long ago. But when David Stewart shares his experience and his stories, it's really important that we go and we bear witness to stories that maybe we don't have a personal experience of, to understand how different things can be when you don't fit.

It's not at all a sad thing to have a great memory of a great friend in a great time, and that he was loved, but it is also really important that we are always open to that learning. I really look forward to seeing the documentary that Dave Stewart is sharing.

On a happier note, or perhaps a lighter note, I'm also looking forward to welcoming the Holiday Community Social. It involves your favourite cookies, potentially eggnog, so maybe the Member from O'Leary-Inverness might want to join us, at the PEI Farm Centre next Friday the 9th. All are welcome, regardless of what they're wishing for for Christmas.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This will be my last chance to greet online residents of Brighton before Christmas, so thank you so much for listening and commenting directly to me.

People in Brighton, like most other Islanders, take great pride in their exterior Christmas displays. I am really looking forward to enjoying them all. A big thanks to Brighton in advance for their efforts. I wish them all a great holiday season.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A few days ago, I stood up here and I said some of the fantastic things happening at Lot 16 Hall and I forgot one of them, one of the most important ones, the Lot 16 Hall online silent auction fundraiser that is happening very soon. I'm excited to say that there's over 150 items to bid on this year. You can go to their Facebook page and take a look at those items. That will be starting December 4th.

I am also told that the delicious fudge that has been featured at many events at Lot 16 Hall, as well as discussed several times now in the Legislature, will be one of the items for purchase on that sale. I encourage everyone to have a look.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise. Welcome to all my colleagues in the Chamber today, to those joining us, and to everybody from Mermaid-Stratford, and the rest of the Island that's tuning in.

I got called out yesterday by my sister because I seem to always say hi to people in Mermaid-Stratford, but I never say hi to my sister, who, yes, she watches every evening after she comes home from teaching. As you know, she can be, you know, good at basically giving marks out, as the Premier probably remembers. She, first of all, was disappointed that she had to see the Speaker reprimand us yesterday because, she's like, "That's not something that he ever really has to do." She felt bad for you having to do that. But she did mention somebody on the other side of the floor there that really seems to be in tune with what's going on with everyday Islanders, and that is the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure's grandmother.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Ms. Beaton: I'd like to recognize a Charlottetown Rural High School student who reached out to me today. Her name is Charlotte MacNutt-Lawson. Her Grade 10 pre-IB class and her project team have invited me to attend a presentation on their

project. Their project is about improving sexual health education in Prince Edward Island. That's a Grade 10 class that is prioritizing the province's sexual education program and not being good enough. I want to just really give them a huge shout-out of how they are really prioritizing it. It just shows how much engagement we have in 16-year-olds and, you know, someday soon, maybe they'll be able to vote.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I'd like to give a shout-out to all the great people that would be watching in from up in District 26 Alberton-Bloomfield.

This coming Sunday afternoon, I'm going to be hosting a public skate up at the Jacques Cartier Arena from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Ones from every political party are more than welcome to attend. If you have no affiliation, you're still welcome to attend. Rumour has it that the jolly old elf will be there. I'm not sure if he'll have all the treats that the Leader of the Third Party has referenced there, but maybe he'll have some.

Just in closing, certainly like to welcome and acknowledge Roxanne and Karen for being in the gallery here today. Thank you for your dedication and all the hard work that you do for Islanders.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Keppoch.

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

I will be very brief. I was first elected in the fall of 2011. From the get-go, I like to believe that I was a strong advocate for mental health and wellness here on PEI. I'd like to recognize two individuals that have joined us here in the gallery today: Karen Cumberland, PEI Alliance for Mental Well-being; and Roxanne Carter-Thompson, with the Adventure Group.

I'm extremely, extremely proud and privileged to be part of a government that believes in working with NGOs to further the initiatives to help Islanders with mental health and other issues. I applaud these organizations for the great work that you do in our communities and continue to do what you do, regardless of naysayers. You're doing wonderful work.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aylward: I'd also like to recognize a young lady from Prince Edward Island who is currently in Ottawa doing tremendous work on Parliament Hill. You'll all remember Hannah MacLellan. She came to the legislative floor back a number of years ago and presented a bill, which we renamed the bill "Hannah's bill".

Recently, she attended an event on Parliament Hill with senators, Members of Parliament, and various other dignitaries to ensure that disability inclusion was being moved forward on a federal level, as well.

I'd really like to say hello to Hannah and thank you for her continued work that she continues to do.

Last but not least, I'd like to send out a huge hello to a very good friend of mine, Danny Harris.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. members, I'd like to stand, too, and recognize Roxanne and Karen and all those at home watching from District 1. It's surprising how many events you go to and how many people will actually tell you that they are watching online at home, so a big shout-out to them. I'm not going to start naming names. I told them all that I would, the next time I'm up, I'll mention your name, but I haven't got time to go through everybody's name. I've only got 40 seconds to get through it here.

I'm not going to start thanking everyone just yet. I'll thank everyone at the last "shall it carry". Just don't know what can happen here from day to day. So, Pages, just have patience. I will thank you and I will have my time to thank everyone.

There's one gentleman here in the gallery with us today, Jack Weeks. Jack's been with us since September as an intern, internship. He is leaving us at the end of the month. You know, when you get these students in, it's sad to see them go, but as our mother said, we've got to let them go from under our wings and let them grow. We wish you luck into the future, Jack, and maybe someday, we'll see you either at the Clerk's table or the Speaker chair or in a member's chair. Carry on with your political career. Looking forward to you setting policies for me when I make it to the Colville Manor in Souris.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Better hurry up, Jack.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Speaker: Good one.

Statements by Members

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

RTA Discrimination Amendment

Mr. McNeilly: Mr. Speaker, as a Member of the Legislative Assembly, it is our responsibility to ensure the voices of all Islanders are heard.

It is our responsibility to protect and advance the rights and wellbeing of vulnerable marginalized communities in all aspects of Prince Edward Island.

Addressing ways to prevent and combat how our government policies and legislation allows room for systemic racism and discrimination to be present is part of that responsibility.

With an amendment I brought forward to the *Residential Tenancy Act*, supported by all members of the House, I believe we made a positive step towards ensuring discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated in our PEI rental industry.

But let me be clear: It is not good enough. The amendment allows for a tenant to break a lease agreement after filing a complaint that provides evidence via a report from the Human Rights Commission that their landlord was discriminated against them.

Today, tomorrow, and each day going forward that we don't address the three-year backlog in cases in the PEI Human Rights Commission, this amendment will not protect the people it sets out to.

I appreciate the Minister of Social Development and Housing working with me on this for Islanders, but he knows as well as I do that it's not a perfect solution and does not go far enough in protecting the human rights of individuals today.

While it is not a perfect solution, what gives me hope is that it can be. In order for this to happen, we must address the external factors limiting its abilities. We need to further increase our investment into staffing the Human Rights Commission and find ways to streamline the investigation process, because if we don't, some of our most vulnerable Islanders will be harmed.

These parties in the House may not always agree on many things, but I know we all agree that we cannot stand by and allow this to happen, knowing that there is something we can do to prevent it.

While I thank all members for their support, our work is not done yet. So, I also ask for your continued support in making this amendment something we can be proud of, and not just another clause in a piece of legislation with no substantial effect, but most importantly, to lead by example. Discrimination has no place in Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Gordon and Andrea McKenna

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize all our Island farmers who are innovative leaders in agriculture and use hard work, science, and technology to sustainably produce the best food. In

particular, I'd like to talk about farmers Gordon and Andrea McKenna in Newton.

In fact, I heard from Gordie today, and he and Andrea are currently in Ottawa as invited delegates to the Grow Canada 2022 Conference, where they are promoting PEI's leadership in adopting crucial agriculture sustainability practices.

Gord is a third-generation farmer who manages Country View Farms with his parents, Greg and Karen McKenna. They specialize in potatoes and other crops, like forages and grains.

New technology is something that Gord and Andrea are passionate about using to benefit their operation. For example, they use science and technology to predict when and where blight might happen and to lessen the amounts of protectant that they need to use on their crops.

Also, they own Dialed in Precision Ag Services, which specializes in GPS grid soil sampling and site-specific SWAT mapping services. This automated soil sampling of thousands of points across the field, coupled with the associated location data, enables variable rate application of crop inputs: the precise application rate at precise locations.

Recently, Gord and Andrea decided to diversify into carrots and turnips, and they founded the Bunny Burrow Vegetable Co. It is a true family business and was named by their children.

Gord and Andrea's goal is to teach people that farming is one of the most important jobs in the world. They host farm tours, present at school events, and mentor young people.

I want to give a huge thank you to Gord, Andrea and family, great members of our PEI farm community.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Thanking Volunteers

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, across our province, there are numerous organizations that are doing incredible work to serve, protect, assist, and fill in the gaps of the

various needs of Islanders. Behind these incredible organizations, associations and NGOs are even more incredible volunteers.

Particularly during this time of year, we see Islanders stepping up in many capacities to help those in need during what can be a stressful and difficult time for some.

There are too many organizations and people doing amazing work to start to list them all, but I wanted to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has, and will be, volunteering their time or resources during the weeks leading up to the holiday season.

Whether it be volunteering at a local food bank, providing meals to those in need, raising funds to help sponsor a family's Christmas, or helping our vast array of Island charities get through this busy time, thank you for the work you are doing.

I also want to take this opportunity to recognize the first responders across this province as they begin to prepare for the many challenges the winter months bring for what they do.

In particular, I want to give a big shout-out to the dedicated volunteer firefighters on the Miscouche Fire Department and the Wellington Fire Department in my district.

While many of us will be enjoying the holidays with friends and family, it's our volunteer first responders that will likely have this time interrupted, responding to the calls of their fellow community members in an emergency.

We say it all the time, but it can never be said enough. Thank you very much for your service.

We are so fortunate to live in a province where we take care and look after one another, not just during this special time of year, but year-round. It's one of the many things that makes living in this province so special.

On behalf of the third party, I want to wish all Islanders a safe and happy holiday season, as well as everyone in Evangeline-Miscouche district.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: End of statements.

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: For our first question, I'll call on the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

As the years tick by on this administration, one thing is becoming clear: This is a government that cannot get things done.

On three occasions recently, I asked the Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning to commit to providing a low-interest loan for two rural child care facilities so that their future can be secured. On all three occasions, the minister failed to commit to this easy, low risk fix to an urgent problem.

In the flurry of pre-election goodies that was announced yesterday, 2% loans for other things were announced to great fanfare, yet the minister will not commit to a 4% loan to keep child care services open in rural areas.

An Hon. Member: Wow.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Low-interest loans for child care centres (further)

Leader of the Opposition: A question to the Premier: Why isn't your government getting this done by providing these loans immediately, before these child care centres go under, taking children, families, and the affected communities with them?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

I appreciate the question from the hon. leader. I think to reiterate what the minister of education has said, is that we continue to work with those two individual child care

centres to try to find some ways to help them forward. There is a process in place. We don't stand in the Legislature and say we're going to loan this company money. There's a process that would need to take place to go through Treasury Board, et cetera.

When the minister of education indicated that they were working hard with these individuals, they are, and if we can get to a point where we can agree on something rather quickly, that's what we will do, but we do have to follow processes.

I understand what the hon. leader is saying and the importance of these child care centres in rural Prince Edward Island. That's why we've made record investments in this area. It hasn't been perfect. We'll continue to work with them, Mr. Speaker, and I think we can find a solution in the short term.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Well, my concern, and the concern of many of the families and parents, is that you're going to continue working with them until they close, and that's not good enough.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: It's not a new problem. This has been known for years and years.

Ms. Lund: Exactly.

Leader of the Opposition: I've received numerous emails and calls from families with children in Merry Pop-Ins, which is, of course, one of the centres I was just referring to. One couple, who are both registered nurses, are having to cut back on the number of hours that they work because the infant program there closed last Friday. Of course, this is only going to further worsen the nursing shortage.

We've heard this kind of thing over and over and over again for years, but this Premier

and the minister choose to do nothing, at the expense of our health care system.

Impact of child care on health system

Another question to the Premier: Why are you deliberately making decisions that hurt our health care system?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Well, Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the question from the hon. Leader of the Opposition. It does talk about just how integrated all of the departments are to provide services for Islanders and how we have to continue to help one to help the other and keep things rolling forward. That's exactly what we have been doing as this government.

There is no doubt, there is a significant challenge in health care across Prince Edward Island, across Canada, across North America. We're not trying to shy away from that. We're trying to actually run into it to try to help in everywhere we can.

I would take exception to the fact that we're not trying to help these two individual child care centres when the exact opposite is true. We'll continue to try to find a solution, and as fast as we can find it, we will.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Well, last Friday, I asked a series of questions on land development in my district, at Fairview.

This is a major development that's proceeded without any permitting, and without any communication with the municipality, which is on the edge of bringing in its own land use plan, without any public consultation; none of this.

Islanders are desperate for a government that is going to protect this precious Island from harmful and haphazard development.

Development without proper process

To the same Premier: Why isn't your government getting this done, and why does your government continue to allow development to happen without following proper process, or even discussion with critical stakeholders?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think ever Prince Edward Islander from tip to tip understands what a treasure we have here in this province and how hard we have to work to protect it. I think in three and a half years, we've made incredible strides in that regard.

There are challenges. As the minister has indicated many times, there is some work around the rules and regulations that need to probably be a little bit clearer. I speak daily with the minister. He is as concerned as I am. His staff is working on making these changes and trying to make sure everything that we do is in the best interest of Prince Edward Island, the environment of Prince Edward Island, the people of Prince Edward Island. I think you'll hear more about that in the days ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Last Wednesday, I asked questions to the Minister of Health and Wellness on the delay in establishing an overdose prevention site here on Prince Edward Island, yet another thing that this government has not got done. No mental health campus, no midwifery, no electronic health records, no overdose prevention site.

Lack of confidence in minister of H&W

To the Premier: Why should Islanders have confidence in this minister and in your government that has not been able to get any of these critical care things done?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: I think Islanders live in the real world and they know that a lot of these things are monumental challenges that take a

lot of time, but we've actually did them. We've actually taken them on and did them.

The hon. member talks about midwifery, for example. A midwifery program on PEI is being set up. It normally takes four years; we've developed it in two and a half. That's a pretty significant turnaround –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier King: – that's a pretty significant turnaround.

I wish, more so than any member in that House, that I could click my fingers and get these things done. We inherited quite a mess. We've got most of it cleaned up and we're on the way to getting things done. I think Islanders can take a lot of comfort in that.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

I've almost run out of the number of times we've had a due date given to us for the birth of midwifery in this province. The former minister said we'd have full tip-to-tip coverage in January 2020, I think it was. And here we are, almost four years later and still nothing.

All last night and into this morning, critically ill patients – and here, I'm talking about patients who have difficulty breathing. I'm talking about patients who may have signs of cardiac arrest or stroke – critically ill patients at our main ER were waiting over 10 hours for care. This is, by no means, the fault of the frontline staff; they're incredible. It is the fault of an inactive government.

As I read an email from one of our ER nurses last night, which I'm going to table later today, my heart broke, both for her and for her colleagues and for the patients who are waiting 10 hours or more for life-saving help.

Crisis in emergency room at QEH

A question to the Premier: Is this the health care system that you are so proud to defend?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to defend the people who stand on the frontlines and provide these services every day and knowing that they're in crisis, not just in the province, but across the region and across the country and across the continent.

It's not easy days in there. There's no easy button to fix health. We haven't tried to have an easy button to fix health. We're taking the systemic challenges that are there and we're trying to deal with them one at a time. We're trying to deal with them in bunches, if that's what it takes to get solutions.

But I'll be the first to say, it's not acceptable to have to wait that long. We've tried to institute programs like Pharmacy Plus to take some pressure off the ER system. That's helped a little bit. It's not a magic pill. It's not a be all and end all. It's a little bit.

We'll keep trying to diversity the system, working with the professionals who are in the system every day to try to make it a little bit better for Islanders.

That's the commitment I made in 2019. That's the commitment I'll make today and every day I have the privilege to serve in this chair.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, our ERs are overrun because people's heart attacks cannot go to the pharmacy for help.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: Islanders were told by this government it would be about people – people – yet every day, it's more clear that you don't care about Island workers, you don't care about the children of this Island who will inherit accelerating climate change, and you don't care about health care workers who are holding our over-stretched system together. So many people that you do not care about.

Priorities of government

To the Premier: Why has your administration chosen to become a government that is committed to paving, that is committed to profits for off-Island real estate trusts and corporations, that is committed to providing permits for rascal developers, rather than a government for the people, for Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: When he talks about climate change and adaptation, we have the most aggressive plans in the world. (Indistinct). We've done a great job there and we're proud of that.

We've moved from ninth to third in efficiency in Canada, so we're on a good path there.

But every Islander knows – every Islander outside of that caucus knows that it's going to take time to fix these things. Every Prince Edward Islander knows that you can't fix all of these issues at once.

If I could fix the health care system in one fell swoop, I would have done it on the first day I was here. We can't do that. Islanders understand that. Islanders want to know that the government is working every day to fix these challenges; to take them head on.

That's what we've done, that's what we'll continue to do, and that's what any good government should do.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Mr. Speaker, the Premier stated several times that he has full confidence in his minister of health. I'll tell you who doesn't have full confidence: The frontline nursing staff, the Islanders sitting in the ERs, and physicians with waitlists longer than months.

Assistance for health care crisis

Question to the Premier: I certainly hope it's not too late, but please, for the sake of Islanders, will you do something to help us out of this health care crisis?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've been working every day since we've taken office to try to fix this situation, but there's no simple fix.

I know, I talk to Islanders from tip to tip. Islanders are challenged when it comes to health care, but they know that the health minister doesn't wake up every day and try to make it harder. Nor did the health minister before, the minister before, the one that will come after.

This isn't something that politics can fix. This takes investment, it takes creativity, it takes listening to the individuals who are leaders. People like Michael Gardam, who everyone on that side of the chair has chastised for doing it. We'll take their advice, because we're not going to get politics in the way of fixing health care.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Mr. Speaker, my caucus and I have put forward solutions over the past three years, because we are listening to those Islanders.

We asked for retention bonuses almost three years ago. We asked for child care access for frontline health care workers, preventative supports and basic respect of all our health care workers.

The Premier and his minister chose to wait until the eve of an election to support our frontline health care workers, and now, we're in extreme trouble because you fumbled the football here, Premier.

An Hon. Member: Oh yeah (Indistinct)

Ms. Beaton: Question to the Premier: How can Islanders trust that you'll actually lead us out of this health care crisis when you only take action on the leadup to an election?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Mr. Speaker, I've never seen a party so focused on election as this party across, here. I don't know what they're talking about. We're working every day with the mandate we've been given by Islanders to deliver for Islanders.

I would say, in response to the question from the hon. member across, I think Islanders can have faith that we can find these solutions, because we're the only party in here who doesn't care about the politics of it. We're looking for solutions.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: So, let's talk about respect from this government. The minister of health promised diabetes advocates yesterday that he would do a ministerial statement for Diabetes Month, which ended yesterday.

Out of the nine ministerial statements yesterday, Diabetes Month was not one of them. It was actually pulled from the list. It got a 10 second shout-out from the minister during greetings, instead.

You know what a Green government would have announced yesterday?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Beaton: A Green government would have announced that we were going to remove the age cap off insulin pumps. We would have removed those.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Beaton: We would have funded amputation prevention methods, which this government has ignored for the last four years. That's what we would have funded.

This side of this House believes that one Islander every eight months having an amputation because of diabetes is unethical and inhumane and unacceptable. That's why we would have announced those.

Speaker: Question.

Long-awaited supports for diabetics

Ms. Beaton: Question to the Premier: With all the promises flying around yesterday, why didn't any of them include the long-awaited diabetes supports?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Mr. Speaker, there's a lot to unravel there. I can tell you that.

I don't know what the hon. member thinks in here, but it's the people of Prince Edward Island who select governments. It's not your caucus. So, you can wish and will all you want that people will have an opportunity at some point in 2023 to cast their vote and choose their government.

They will choose on a variety of things, and we'll let people decide that, not you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Influenza, RSV, and COVID are running rampant here in Prince Edward Island. Our children are the ones that are being infected the most, and there's no sign of this slowing down any time soon.

We've seen patients dying in ERs in other jurisdictions because of long wait times, and I'll be tabling the wait times of our ER over the last two days because it is appalling; 81 people in our ER last night.

I'll tell you what else a Green government would have announced yesterday. We would have announced reopening the cold and fever clinics so people didn't have to go to the ER when they didn't have an emergency, which is what this government wants them to do today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Addressing crisis in ERs

Ms. Beaton: Question to the Premier: You didn't seem to have any big announcements to keep our ERs up and running. Are you waiting for an Islander to die in the emergency room waiting rooms before you'll actually address the crisis in our ERs?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: So, Mr. Speaker, I hope Islanders are watching because what I'm hearing is what a Green government would do will be what they want to do, and they wouldn't listen to any of the professionals that provide the advice.

We don't walk in and tell the professionals to open up a clinic. We listen to them. They look at the resources that are there and they try to disburse them the best they can. By my count, just now that I'm up on the floor, because I made a note of this, that at least on 10 occasions, what I have heard from the Leader of the Opposition and from his party is that they wouldn't have listened to Dr. Morrison when it comes to doing things during COVID. They know better. They know better than Dr. Morrison.

Through Fiona, when Tanya Mullally and all the professionals were leading us through the most difficult time in a hundred years, there were seven occasions when the Green Party said they wouldn't listen to Tanya Mullally, that they know better.

I don't know better than the professionals. I've taken their advice every second I've been in this job, and I'll take it every second I'm in the job. I hope Islanders are listening to what the alternative over there is.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Okay, members.

An Hon. Member: Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pretty sure that CPHO is telling you that workers need to stay home when they're sick, but you didn't listen to that advice, did you?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Altass: Mr. Speaker –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Altass: – tens of thousands of Island workers woke up this morning no longer having access to emergency leave when sick, and the job protection that comes with it.

This will not only force sick workers back to work; it will prevent them from being able

to follow Dr. Morrison's advice to stay home when they're sick at a time when respiratory illnesses are threatening to collapse our ER capacity.

Job protection under ESA (further)

The minister hasn't done anything to prevent this situation, so I'm going to ask the Premier: Will Cabinet immediately amend the *Employment Standards Act* regulations to specify that a COVID-19 infection is a circumstance that qualifies a worker for emergency leave and job protection under the act?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Mr. Speaker, as we've been saying from the beginning that we would keep this in place until such time as the act gets actual collaboration from all parties involved and we come up with a good long-term solution, not just pick a number out of a hat for what the days should be.

So, the answer to that question is not only yes; it was done at 6:00 a.m. this morning.

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

Ms. Altass: Well, I am glad to hear that something was done. It was like pulling teeth. My goodness.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Altass: We had to drag you kicking and screaming across the line to do what needs to be done for workers –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Altass: – but you know, you did a little something there.

I'd like to add something else here, then, Premier, for you to consider.

Like the minister, this side of the House is also hearing that some Island workers are not getting supported while sick because their employers are refusing to apply to the Special Leave Fund. This is shameful and entirely preventable.

Special Leave Fund access for workers

A question to the Premier: Will you permit all Island workers to apply directly to the Special Leave Fund to ensure that Island workers are financially supported when they stay home while sick, just as Dr. Morrison has asked?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Mr. Speaker, if there's any Island worker out there that finds themselves in that solution, you should call the minister's office and we'll help you through it (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Back in October, which feels a really long time ago, I asked the Minister of Finance when we could expect the fall economic update. He advised it was being worked on and would be released soon.

I'm pretty sure that with the flurry of announcements yesterday, we can be sure that that update includes a healthy surplus of cash.

An Hon. Member: Exactly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Status of fall economic update

Ms. Bell: Question to the Minister of Finance: Soon is now much, much later, where's the fall economic update?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. McLane: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, I agree, it does need to come. Obviously, it did put us behind by a week or so. I would remind the member, too, that there is a lot of spending, obviously, in the last few months with Fiona and inflationary supports.

We look forward to bringing the federal fiscal update and finalizing it in the next coming days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In early November, the Minister of Social Development and Housing stated during debate on the Capital Budget, then again in response to a question in Question Period, that government is working on a support package to help landlords facing increased operating costs this winter and that something would be coming out this week. This is after the minister froze the rent increase for 2023.

Support package for landlords

Question to the Minister of Social Development and Housing: When will you be delivering on your commitment for a support package for landlords?

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

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My understanding, it is going to Treasury Board either today or tomorrow and CCOPP for approval and should be announced any day.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Gallant: There's only one more day left in this week, as my calendar indicates. We'll have to wait and see, I guess.

We've seen that the government cannot follow through on their commitments to build government-operated affordable housing in the timelines they provide. Until they can, we need to partner with private developers and not burn bridges. We need a balance.

Private sector re: housing crisis

Question to the minister: How can we expect the private sector to help solve our housing crisis if we refuse to address the issues they are bringing forward in response to your government's recent decisions?

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

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over the course of this last couple of months, not only have I met with the landlord association but numerous developers. We've got numerous developers ready to start their projects, and they're very excited on the 2%.

One thing I've learned through this whole process is not every landlord is part of the landlord association. A lot of things that are being said in the landlord association meetings is not necessarily what other landlords are saying.

One thing I have come to realize, too, the landlord association rep, Chris LeClair, that is a good friend of the Leader of the Third Party, I come to find out he's longer a registered lobbyist. I haven't been able to meet with him. It expired last January, so if you could let him know next time you see him to renew his membership and I'll get back to him.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party, your second supplementary.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another decision that confuses me is one the minister spoke about yesterday regarding Causeway Bay Hotel in Summerside. The minister stated that the owners gave them a number that was too high for government to purchase the building.

Well, his bosses said in here repeatedly that money is not an issue. He could have offered them a different amount and gave him some gift cards and some Denny dollars, if he wanted to.

Counteroffer re: Causeway Bay Hotel

Question to the minister: Typically in negotiations, you don't back away after the

first offer. Why didn't you provide a counteroffer?

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

Mr. MacKay: Well, Mr. Speaker, one thing that this government takes quite pride in is not throwing money when it's not needed. We certainly saw the previous administration had numerous scandals when it came to money. This is one that just didn't work. It wouldn't make sense to the taxpayers. It was double of what the price should have been, and we just weren't prepared to do it.

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

Mr. Henderson: I know the Minister of Health and Wellness hasn't had many questions yet today, so I'm going to give him a go here.

The staffing issues in our public health care system continue to be in shambles, but our private long-term care staffing shortage is also in a critical state. Staff are often paid less, have less benefits, and are also working under unsafe protocols.

In 2020, the Department of Health and Wellness formed a committee task force to work with private nursing homes to address staffing challenges.

Staffing challenges in private LTC

Question to the minister of health: Can you provide this House an update of the work of this committee and what specific objectives it's currently working on?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Hudson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I do thank the hon. member, my colleague from the western part of the province for the question.

Over the last two and half years, you look at the staff right within the department, the amount that they have had on their plate. But I do have to say that staff in the department, they are continuously working with the owner-operators of our long-term

care facilities to meet, as much as possible, the needs of those facilities and we will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Henderson: Well, that’s interesting, Mr. Speaker. He’s formed a committee; they’re out working hard on behalf of Islanders. But I can’t imagine this committee is actually accomplishing very much these days because I hear that a lot of them have resigned.

The MacLeod Group of nursing homes, Atlantic Baptist, Dr. John Gillis Memorial Lodge – which I think was in the minister of agriculture’s riding – and the PEI **seniors group** have all resigned from this group.

An Hon. Member: What?

Resignation of LTC committee members

Mr. Henderson: Will the minister of health confirm to this House that they did so because of government failing to recognize the health professionals in our private system for retention initiatives?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Hudson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You know, yesterday, we heard ones from the third party over there basically saying that they had no faith in our NGOs, that they felt that we shouldn’t be working with our NGOs. Here we have –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Hudson: Here we have another member from the third party basically blasting, basically casting doubt on the ability, on the hard work ethic that we have within the Department of Health and Wellness, within staff within the Department of Health and Wellness, that go to work day in, day out, to make life and to work with these organizations. It’s – I just, I find it hard to believe just how the third party, their attitude towards NGOs and towards our hard-working staff.

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

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, the minister has got it all wrong. It’s not about the lack of respect. It’s that this group has no respect for this government, is the issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Henderson: These are hard-working private operators out there, and the PEI seniors group home that are working towards this. The group’s voice: Government collaborated in bad faith about not informing them of the retention incentives, and being announced days after the last committee meeting of October 11th. Not a lot of respect shown there.

Relationship with private LTC providers

Question to the minister of health: These emails are clear on where they stand on the issue and have lost trust in your government. What are you doing to fix this relationship with our private nursing home operators who are providing a service we desperately need, and get their contracts signed?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Unlike the third party that does not respect NGOs, does not respect staff –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Hudson: – the hon. member may insinuate that I do not respect and really, deeply appreciate the great work –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Minister has the floor.

Mr. McNeilly: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Minister has the floor.

Mr. Hudson: Unlike – to reiterate –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Hudson: – the third party, who has no respect for NGOs, no respect for frontline staff, it does appear that they do have respect for our long-term care private nursing homes.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Hudson: And that is the one thing that I do share with the hon. member, is that respect and appreciation for our private long-term nursing homes, and I will continue to work with them, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've talked before about the many subdivision developments out in the central part of the Island that's in my area, and of course, whether they're in an unincorporated area, which there is a lot of, and whether they're in a municipality, they all need sewer and water and roads.

Ideally, centralized sewer and water is a good thing. In fact, I was talking to one subdivision developer who said they're having to increase the price of the lots by \$50,000 each just to put the sewer and water and roads, and that's septic beds and wells and roads that are not government-owned.

Even places where they're near centralized sewer and water, municipalities lack the funding needed to connect new subdivisions to that, like in North Rustico Harbour, or there's a couple in Cavendish Resort Municipality.

I was thinking about what minister to ask this to, whether it's transportation and infrastructure, community and fisheries, but I think it's the department of land that makes the policies, so I'd like to ask the minister of land.

Support for centralized sewer and water

How will your department support and encourage centralized sewer and water solutions in new and existing subdivisions?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Land.

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

Hon. member, that is a good question.

We're, right now, working to get over a number of hurdles with permits and land. We know we do need housing. We need more housing. We'll do our very best to work with municipalities to ensure that they have the infrastructure in place that they need.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, there was an operating budget, and in the address, they talked about a municipal housing fund. We are establishing a \$5 million fund with the Federation of Municipalities to work with municipalities to prepare lots for construction-ready projects that included roadways, and utilities like sewer and water, and site work.

But \$5 million is not a lot of money when it comes to those sorts of infrastructure projects. As well, I know that the federal government has a housing accelerator fund that includes supports such as upfront funding for investments in municipal housing planning.

Status of municipal housing fund

My question to the minister of land is: What is the status of the municipal housing fund, and is there potential to grow this fund to better achieve its objectives?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That fund has actually been put over to the Federation of PEI Municipalities. They're actually working on the guidelines and the procedures for that fund so municipalities can apply, so that they can upgrade their infrastructure as it applies to new developments.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, your second supplementary.

Mr. Trivers: That's great to hear, because we need to connect our developments to central sewer and water, we need to get good roads in there, and we need to do that for existing subdivisions as well.

Outside of municipalities, often there is little transparency as to what developments are occurring. We heard the leader of the official opposition talk a little bit about that today. For example, the current process only allows consideration of submissions from any property owners within 100 metres of any proposed subdivision. This is the *Planning Act* for Subdivision and Development Regulations.

So, this doesn't work well in rural, unincorporated areas. Because there is no land use plan, it's not clear what is being considered for the area as a whole. In fact, it's not even clear how the area as a whole is considered. So, we need some solutions. Maybe the local MLA could be identified or consulted.

Transparency and land use planning

My question to the minister of land is: What options are you considering to improve this process with respect to transparency, land use planning, and public engagement?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Land.

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

Hon. member, it's one of my biggest goals as minister of land, is to clarify and streamline that process, and work with both transportation and environment to ensure that we can do what Islanders need in a timely fashion.

But I will say, through the construction boom, we have been able to process applications quicker. I'll also point out that we do not have a land use plan on PEI. That's something that keeps coming up and it's something that I will continue to work on.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Premier King: Stay tuned.

Ms. Compton: Stay tuned.

I'll also point out that other provinces like Ontario and Alberta, they've got wait times of a hundred days and they do have a land use plan. Halifax has 47 days. We're averaging around 20.

We'll continue to do the work that we need to do. It definitely is on our radar, and I thank the member for the question.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've spoken a few times this session about shoreline protection for residents being impacted by erosion and climate change. In my district, there are definitely two groups of people I hear from. One is people who are really concerned about the impacts of shoreline armouring and work in the buffer zone. Things like Point Deroche is a big example that's brought up, even in my district.

Then there's a group of people who live on the shoreline and own property. They're really worried about the impacts of erosion and climate change, and what they can do to safely and effectively protect their property and investments.

Varying needs and concerns re: shoreline protection

This is a question to the Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action: What are we doing as a province to balance the needs and concerns of these two groups of people?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Therein lies the problem. We do have two very different sides. We have one side – well, the Green Party, for example, who didn't know we could work in a buffer zone until this session and don't want people to;

and then we have other people who think that we need to have some protection in the buffer zones.

I guess my job is to find a policy, using experts, that we can protect the shorelines of Prince Edward Island to make sure that we're going to be here tomorrow, that we leave Prince Edward Island here for future without doing something that goes drastically against the natural look and feel of Prince Edward Island, and obviously, doesn't block beaches and those sorts of things.

My plan is to sit down with experts, starting tomorrow, and work on a policy for the spring.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do fully appreciate that this is a challenging task. I do know, however, that we can't keep kicking this down the road. I know the minister is working hard, listening to the experts, and is passionate about finding a solution to this as well.

Question to the Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action: What sort of options are we realistically considering as we go forward?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I talked about it a couple times this session, about development zones where the rules may be different in different areas based on the speed of erosion, based on the slope, a number of factors, that we may have a bigger buffer zone in some areas than others if it's necessary.

But we'd really like to work that out, and my understanding is the climate school at UPEI has a lot of the mapping work done, so I'm looking forward to seeking their help on this. I've sought it. I'll have it here shortly.

But I think the thing I do want to touch on is there was over 570 applications to work in the buffer zone in 2021, and they had a variety of things, from floating docks to stairs to shoreline protection to, in some cases, looking to remove trees. So, we know that there's a big need out there. There's a lot of ask out there for people wanting to do things. What we have to do is make sure that we do it in a way that protects Prince Edward Island and that it's as natural and native as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, your second supplementary.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's a lot of uncertainty out there, and people wondering how they're going to proceed. Part of this conversation is around what kind of work, if any, would be permitted to be done within the buffer zone as they repair from Fiona damage, and just going forward in the future.

I mean, we've heard this option about the possibility for a moratorium on development work within a buffer zone area, at least until the experts have some time to weigh in and provide a path forward that is agreeable and has that balance that was referred to in the previous question.

Moratorium on buffer zone development

A question to the Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action: Where do you stand on this idea of a moratorium, and is something like that feasible?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to approach this very cautiously. There are people who had damage in Fiona who have their family homes in a very precarious situation if we were to get another storm, so I wouldn't want to bring in measures that would prevent them from being able to bring the protection that they need to. I'm very concerned about that.

I'm getting concerns from companies who do work in the buffer zone who are all very good, upstanding companies. They're all Islanders. They coach hockey teams, they go to church, they're all part of our communities, so they're not bad people, but what they're scared – is through the fall session, that they've been painted as bad people for doing work in the buffer zone, which they're not. They've done it with our permission.

Some of them are very worried about going back and doing any more work, and I know there's a substantial amount of repair work that needs to be done post-Fiona to help protect some places, particularly in the hon. member's riding, in the Rustico area, there's a lot there.

So, I want to be very careful about bringing in a moratorium that would prevent us from being able to do those things. I'd want to be very careful about doing a moratorium that would disallow people from putting stairs down to their beach so they can enjoy it and things like that.

But what I will commit to is this: There will be a moratorium in place on any new development on the shoreline until we get this policy right.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Mr. Speaker, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women spoke about how pleased she was to participate in a meeting on a National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.

However, the document released was not what advocates had been hoping for. All of the actions in it are optional, so how much of a difference this actually will make to Islanders really is up to this government and what they choose to do with it.

Actions to end gender-based violence

To the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women: What actions do you intend to champion going forward?

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

Ms. Jameson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was certainly a historical moment as I joined my federal, provincial, and territorial colleagues from across the country to sign on to the first ever national action plan.

The plan is fairly broad, and certainly, there is a lot of leeway that will allow the provinces to find solutions that are specific to their area.

So, what I'm looking forward to doing is speaking to stakeholders. I'm speaking to government departments and I'm finding out what the needs are here on PEI and working with the federal government on the final agreement. I understand that it's a significant amount of money that will be allocated to Prince Edward Island, and I really am looking forward to the projects and programs and supports that are going to come to fruition as a result of those dollars.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Mr. Speaker, the minister is years into this mandate. I'm very distressed to hear that she doesn't yet know what the needs are on this.

The third pillar in this framework is on justice. I have heard from a few women lately who have left abusive relationships and are finding the justice system is making them even more unsafe.

One person told me that her ex fired his lawyer and decided to self-represent and then started contacting her lawyer constantly with demands, none of which were reasonable but all of which required an enormous amount on the lawyer's part.

Justice system and gender-based violence

Question to the minister of justice: Can you guess who got billed for all those legal fees?

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

Ms. Compton: Hon. member, I don't think that is my role here is to guess who paid the legal fees, but I will say that we continue to expand our staffing to ensure that we do have what we need there for Islanders.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Mr. Speaker, I don't even know what that was supposed to mean, but I will tell you who paid the legal fees. It all got billed to her lawyer because he doesn't have a lawyer anymore; he's self-representing.

It's hard to imagine but her ex, who now has no legal fees, is deliberately running hers through the roof. This is just a new way that he can control her. She's got a good job, but her resources are not limitless, and her ex knows that well.

Protections within justice system

To the minister of justice: What protections are there for people whose controlling ex-partners are determined to use the legal system to spend all their money?

An Hon. Member: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Hon. member, I believe I'm quoting you saying that access to justice means many things to many people. We have a number of different programs across government. The department does excellent work to be there for Islanders and will continue to do that.

We have expanded our staffing, expanded our number of lawyers, and will continue to do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, final question.

Ms. Lund: Mr. Speaker, all of these programs that the minister speaks of

vaguely, none of them apply in this situation, and you should know that by now.

This is a serious gap because eventually, you run out of choice. Access to the children, division of assets, child support, none of which is over until her ex says it's over, and in the meantime, her legal bills keep going through the roof.

We both know Legal Aid is so underfunded that they are not able to help with this and you have no interest in expanding the scope of who has access to it.

Question to the minister of justice: Instead, what are you going to do to make sure that no mother loses access to their children, her assets, and her dignity at the hands of her controlling ex?

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. member, I agree that that's not acceptable. We are working in the department to do what we can for everyone. We'll increase the budgeting for Legal Aid and –

Ms. Lund: That doesn't help if you don't let people in (Indistinct) –

Speaker: The minister has the floor.

Ms. Compton: Hon. member, you can send all your suggestions to me. I'd be happy to listen to them and we'll discuss them in the department.

Ms. Lund: (Indistinct)

Ms. Compton: Thank you.

Speaker: End of Question Period.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Ministers

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

Residential Home Heating Program

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, in the 2021 Speech from the Throne, our government committed to being equitable and inclusive by creating new programs that give under-represented populations more recognition and support.

One of these programs is the Gender, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Community Enhancement Program.

Earlier this fall, our department launched the program and invited groups from across the province to apply with projects that would make Prince Edward Island a more inclusive province.

Today, I am proud to announce that we have funded 24 projects for a total of a half a million dollars.

The funded groups and projects are now available on our government website. I know there's too many good projects to list them all here today, but I would like to give an example of a few.

The PEI Transgender Network received funding for their project, Breaking the System. With this funding, they will hold a three-day event celebrating International Transgender Day of Visibility.

Another project is with Sport PEI, their project called Building True Sport Across PEI, where they will develop Safe Sport training and True Sport ambassador program.

Government is committed to ensure that all Islanders feel a sense of belonging. These projects are just one way of working to achieve that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly very good to see that there is investment in gender and equity, diversity, inclusion, and building our communities. Twenty-four projects is certainly good to hear, and I look forward to hearing more details about all of these projects and the

incredible work that I'm sure that these groups will do toward these goals.

I will just say that this sounds like a very good start. As a new fund, I would encourage government to connect with all of those organizations throughout this project, as well as at the end, to make sure that it's working for them in the way that they need it to; so that if adjustments need to be made in the future, that that's taken into consideration.

We have quite a wide range of different groups that this fund is striving to support, which is good to see, but also, there's always the risk that we might lose sight of helping some groups when we have such a broad scope.

So, I do encourage government to continue to work with those organizations. It is certainly good to see that NGOs are receiving support to do this important work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McNeilly: Thank you, minister, for the announcement. I think it's important. I'll have a detailed look at that list and see what the projects are, but we have to keep going.

We've talked about this. I've talked with the former minister and I've talked with a lot of ministers across the board. We have issues in our province around this. You need not look any further than the report that was tabled to the Standing Committee on Health and Social Development. We have some issues around this.

We can't stop. We can say this is a good announcement, and it's there, but it doesn't stop the work that we need to do in the very near future. It doesn't stop what has to be done to build equity. Equity is the process; inclusion is the goal. We are not – we have a lot of work to do, and we will. I'm saying that in respect to – I think that you want to learn, minister, and we want to get better at this. We want to get better at this together.

So, today is a good announcement; we have to keep our foot on the pedal and make sure that we change – and we change in this

Chamber, that we change in the kitchen tables, and we change all across Prince Edward Island.

Thank you for this announcement today, and we'll keep going.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: End of statements.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table the email I received, along with others, from an ER nurse at the QEH, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a current data survey on data from the Canadian Blood Services, which shows the current percentage of COVID infection in blood donors in just one month in PEI – spoiler: 67%. I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table emails obtained through a Freedom of Information request sent by the Department of Health and Wellness from the MacLeod Group of nursing homes, the Atlantic Baptist nursing home and Dr. John Gillis Memorial Lodge, withdrawing their

membership from the PEI private nursing home task force set up by this government; and a subsequent email in response to this by the Director of Recruitment and Retention with the Department of Health and Wellness. I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Ms. Beaton: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the CPHO data on lab-confirmed influenza here in PEI for the 2022-2023 season. It will show that our lab-confirmed influenza is already well above the five-year rolling average, two months before it peaked in any other year. I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a screenshot of the QEH wait times in the ER for December 1st, this morning, at 11:30 a.m., which shows that there are 68 people in the emergency department, four at the most urgent, and all of them are waiting over 10 hours in order to get somebody to help them. Obviously, not because of the front line and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table another

screenshot on the status of the QEH emergency room department. This one's from November 30th, last night, at 8:30 p.m. It shows that there was 81 people in the emergency room last night, and there were nine people that were most urgent, all of which would be waiting more than 10 hours in order to get service, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, 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

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that the 11th, 15th, 16th, and 17th orders of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

[The following bills were ordered for third reading]

Clerk: Order No. 11, *An Act to Amend the Plastic Bag Reduction Act*, Bill No. 79;

Order No. 15, *Supplementary Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2022*, Bill No. 89;

Order No. 16, *Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2023*, Bill No. 88;

Order No. 17, *Loan Act 2022*, Bill No. 84.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Premier, that the said bills be now read a third time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

[The following bills were read a third time]

Clerk: Bill No. 79, *An Act to Amend the Plastic Bag Reduction Act*;

Bill No. 89, *Supplementary Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2022*;

Bill No. 88, *Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2023*;

Bill No. 84, *Loan Act 2022*.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Premier, that the said bills do now pass.

Speaker: Hon. members, these are bills introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to with or without amendment, as the case may be, read a third time and it is now moved that the bills do pass.

All those in favour, say "aye".

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary, "nay".

Hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety, bills passed.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wish to advise that this concludes the business that government wishes to conduct this fall sitting.

Speaker: Hon. members, I have been advised that the Lieutenant Governor will be arriving at the George Coles Building shortly. I will now leave the chair to invite her to join us in the Chamber to receive the House and grant Royal Assent to the various bills passed in the House.

Clerk: Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has passed certain Bills during this, the 2nd Session of the 66th General

Assembly, and now begs Your Honour's consideration of the grant of Royal Assent to the following Bills:

An Act to Amend the Grain Elevators Corporation Act, (Bill No. 45);

An Act to Amend the Public Sector Pension Plan Act, (Bill No. 53);

An Act to Amend the Education Act (No. 2), (Bill No. 57);

An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act (No. 2), (Bill No. 68);

Notaries and Commissioners Act, (Bill No. 72);

An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act, (Bill No. 73);

Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2), (Bill No. 75);

An Act to Amend the Early Learning and Child Care Act, (Bill No. 76);

An Act to Amend the Registry Act, (Bill No. 77);

An Act to Amend the Plastic Bag Reduction Act, (Bill No. 79);

An Act to Amend the Rental of Residential Property Act (No. 2), (Bill No. 80);

Gasoline Tax Act, (Bill No. 81);

Land Survey Act, (Bill No. 82);

Loan Act 2022, (Bill No. 84);

An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act (No. 4), (Bill No. 85);

An Act to Amend the Plant Health Act, (Bill No. 86);

Residential Tenancy Act, (Bill No. 87);

Supplementary Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2022, (Bill No. 89);

An Act to Amend the Election Act (No. 2), (Bill No. 120);

An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act, (Bill No. 126).

Her Honour Lieutenant Governor Antoinette Perry: In His Majesty's name, I assent to these bills.

Speaker: May it please Your Honour, we, His Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island in session assembled, approach Your Honour at the close of our labours with sentiments of unfeigned devotion and loyalty to His Majesty's person and government. We do humbly beg for Your Honour's acceptance of a bill to be intituled *Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2023*, thus placing at the disposal of the Crown, the means by which government can be made efficient for the service and welfare of the province.

Clerk: Her Honour, the Honourable Lieutenant Governor, doth thank His Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, accepts their benevolence, and assents to this Bill in His Majesty's name.

Her Honour Lieutenant Governor Antoinette Perry: I wish to commend the hon. members for the conscientious manner in which you have conducted your deliberations to this point of the 2nd Session of the 66th General Assembly of Prince Edward Island.

Je tiens à vous exprimer ma reconnaissance pour votre dévouement au bien-être de tous les Insulaires.

I want to thank you for your dedication to the wellbeing of Islanders.

At this time, I pray that until the Legislative Assembly again meets, each of you enjoy good health and prosperity and that peace and freedom for all people shall be more nearly achieved.

I wish to extend to you my Christmas greeting.

En ce Noël, puisse les expressions de gratitude et les actes de bonté vous donner l'espoir d'une nouvelle année saine et prospère.

This Christmas, may expressions of gratitude and acts of kindness give you hope for a healthy and a prosperous new year.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Donagh.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that this House adjourn and stand to the call of the Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. members, before I call in the question, I'd just like to say a few words. I'm not going to keep everybody long because I know everybody wants to get out and start their Christmas shopping. I've heard that for the last three weeks now: When are we going to get out and do our Christmas shopping?

Now is my time to thank everybody. I'd like to thank staff on all floors. They're great to get along with, they're great to chat with, understand all the issues and what we're all going through. The staff in the Office of the Legislative Assembly, far better than none to work with. They're just excellent. They guide me through, make me look good. Dress me, some of them.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. Myers: Only some of them.

Speaker: JoAnne, yeah.

It's just a great working environment here in the Legislative Assembly on all floors.

Members, to you, too, a big, huge thank you too, because not every day up here I'm perfect, and you fellows also make me look good. When there's mistakes made, when I make a mistake, you definitely let me know, but you let me away with it. So, we all make mistakes, and that's how we learn in here and we grow in here.

As you've seen since November 1st, the work that has been done in here for Islanders – there's debate back and forth, but at the same time, when we get to the kitchen, we all make it look good; make ourselves look good.

Anyway, I just want everybody – Christmas is coming upon us. Take this time of year to spend with family and friends at Christmas time, as much time as you can. I know we all live busy lives, because I live it myself, but make sure you take your time for your family and your friends. It's the most important thing that you can do.

Hon. members, shall it carry? Carried.

Let's get to the kitchen. I'm not worried which floor.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Legislature adjourned until the call of the Speaker.