

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Colin LaVie

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Matters of Privilege and Recognition of  
Guests

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

Excited to welcome everybody back to the Legislature; my colleagues, those who are tuned in online, and those who are joining us in the public gallery. Lots of familiar faces there. Welcome, and I hope you enjoy today's proceedings.

I want to begin my remarks by announcing to Islanders what they might already know, but the annual PEI Crafts Council Christmas Fair is a go this weekend at the Delta in Charlottetown.

Local and regional crafters and artisans will have their wares on full display; a great opportunity to support local as we approach the holiday season. If you haven't already done so, maybe get some Christmas shopping started there.

As well, the excitement grows for the 2023 Canada Winter Games, which our province will proudly host in February, less than 100 days away. It is exciting to see some of the final team selections being announced and wrapping up as we get ready for that wonderful experience that our local youth will get to participate in.

I want to congratulate our curling teams just announced: Team Lenentine, made up of Ella Lenentine, Erika Pater, Kacey Gauthier, and Makiya Noonan, and coached by Robbie Lenentine; as well as Team Snow – Brayden Snow, Jack MacFayden, Davis Nicholson, and Anderson MacDougall, coached by David MacFadyen. A lot of familiar names, and a lot of generational curling names from Prince Edward Island there. I wish them well, as well as all of our athletes and coaches and supporters and fans and family members. This is a family affair for a lot of these individuals.

Finally, there was some mention yesterday by my colleague, the Minister of Finance, and others about a book launch tomorrow

evening in the Cornwall area of our former minister and MLA for a number of years, Ron MacKinley, I believe there may be a couple of excerpts from stories I had written in my time as a journalist. Ron was a member of this Legislature, so I wish him well, and Sam MacPhail, for writing that book.

Tomorrow night, as well, in Mill River, another very esteemed Islander, Don McDougall, will be launching his book, written by Gerry McDougall. I've read two thirds of the book so far. It's a fascinating book by a fascinating Islander, Don McDougall, who's rubbed shoulders with a lot of very impressive people across Canada, across North America, and around the world.

While he has many business exploits and personal exploits to be proud of, I think what Don is most proud of is that he never forgot where he came from. He never forgot that he was a proud citizen of Prince Edward Island, a proud citizen of West Prince. He's back there now doing things to grow the community, to grow the tourism sector of PEI; lots of gas left in the tank.

I wish I could join Don tomorrow night for the launch. I can't make it there, but I had him today for a chat this morning. We had a good chat. I look forward to this book, and knowing Don McDougall and the legendary career he's had, I'm sure there'll be a follow-up book on the next chapter of his exploits, which are only just beginning.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I'd like to welcome everybody back today, and everybody who's watching from home, particularly those from District 17 New Haven-Rocky Point, and to the many people that are in the gallery today. It's lovely to see a relatively full gallery. I see Gerard Deveau there; great to see you, Gerard. Some representation from the Mermaid Women's Institute, including my friend Darcie Lanthier; nice to see you all. I know

that you're going to be mentioned shortly in a member statement.

This week is Transgender Awareness Week and flags have already been raised here in Charlottetown, in Summerside, and in Stratford. There will be one raised outside our Legislative Assembly building here on Friday at 2:00 p.m. after we close up.

This morning, I had the pleasure of meeting with Anastasia Preston, who is with PEERS Alliance. She's a wonderful woman. We had a great chat about the many advances that have been made here on Prince Edward Island in terms of trans care, but also the gaps that exist.

Things have absolutely improved, but there is work to be done in terms of supports, both psychological and physical, when it comes to the trans community here on Prince Edward Island, which numbers around 400 people.

There are many other events that are happening this week related to Transgender Awareness Week, and it will close on Sunday with the Transgender Day of Remembrance. There's a service which happens at 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the PEERS Alliance office.

The PEERS Alliance Transgender Network will hold its first AGM on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, next week, at 6:30 on Zoom, and everybody is absolutely welcome to join that.

Today is also World COPD Day, which is a day which focuses attention on lung diseases and the burden of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease worldwide.

Here on the Island, we have a book which was recently launched by Marlene Bryenton. Marlene has written a series of books, I think this may be her sixth children's book, and it's called *Magic Gifts*. It's specifically about pulmonary fibrosis and organ donation, which may seem like an odd topic for a children's book, but the way Marlene writes these things is so accessible and so beautiful.

The book tells the tale of two grandfathers who are battling pulmonary fibrosis. Again, like World COPD Day, the goal of this is to raise awareness about pulmonary fibrosis,

which is a lung disease which becomes progressively worse, damages the lungs, scars the lungs, and makes it very difficult to breathe.

One of the gentlemen featured in Marlene's book is John Robinson, who is a dear old friend of mine. Earlier this year, John and his wife, Hazel, were awarded with the Order of Canada; very worthy recipients of that. John and Hazel have done some fantastic work here on the Island in the agricultural sector, in the entrepreneurial sector, and John sits on many boards. I have sat with him on a couple of boards over the years and he's wonderful man and, again, very worthy of the Order of Canada.

But John, in this book, in Marlene's book, he talks about his journey with pulmonary fibrosis and the value of having friends and family at a time like this, which is really a protracted crisis. It's a beautiful book and I encourage everybody to go out and look at that.

With the help of sponsors this year, a copy of Marlene's book will be made available to every single Grade 4, 5 and 6 student across the Island. I think that's a beautiful thing. Thank you to the sponsors who came forward to do that and thank you to Marlene for writing yet another beautiful book.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

It's always a pleasure to rise here in this gallery and say hello to everyone, and I'd like to say hello to everyone back in Evangeline-Miscouche and everyone watching.

Also, I'd like to welcome all our guests to the gallery. A special welcome to Gerard Deveau. Gerard used to live in Miscouche. We used to see a lot of each other. I don't see him as often, but it's a pleasure to see you today.

Mr. Speaker, Winston Churchill once said: Healthy citizens are the greatest asset any country can have. I wholeheartedly agree

with this view, and that's why, almost every day in this House, my colleagues and I advocate for our residents to ensure they have access to quality health care on our Island.

Today, I want to acknowledge a program that is promoting better health among Islanders. UPEI launched its CHANGE program earlier this fall to help people who have or are at risk of metabolic syndrome. This includes individuals who have high blood pressure, diabetes, or high cholesterol. The program is part of research conducted by UPEI's Health and Wellness Centre. Participants work with health professionals who monitor health indicators and make changes to their lifestyles for better health.

We all know that eating a balanced diet and exercise is good for us, but we often don't know how to make the change in our lives to let this fall into place. The CHANGE program helps partners learn how to make small changes to their diets that are sustainable instead of going on crash diets. It also helps participants learn simple exercises they can do at home with little or no gym equipment.

This is the third year this program has been in existence and it has enjoyed much success. I wish them all the best going forward. CHANGE is offered in communities across our Island including Summerside, Montague, Stratford, Charlottetown, Cornwall and Alberton. Individuals can participate by contacting this program. They can email the program at [change@upeii.ca](mailto:change@upeii.ca).

I want to congratulate the program's organizers at UPEI for promoting better health in our communities.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Hello to my colleagues and everybody tuning in from around the Island, Charlottetown-Victoria Park, as well as our friends joining us in the gallery today; members of the Women's Institute, Darcy Lanthier, Anne and Gerard, nice to see you.

As was mentioned, today is World COPD Day, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. My dad and my uncle live with that disease. It is a horrible disease. I've watched my dad go from someone who would help with any project at any moment. Every Saturday was spent outside, cutting the grass; whatever needed to be done, he was there to help. One of his biggest regrets is that he's just not able to do that anymore. It's trying to find a completely different way of living. It's awful because you just can't get enough air in your lungs.

I would really love to thank the Lung Association of Nova Scotia and PEI for their ongoing work as we grow to understand this disease and put more into it because it impacts a lot of Islanders and it's devastating.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I'd just like to welcome everybody to the gallery today, and certainly, the members of the Women's Institute that are here. I look forward to the statement that will be coming. Earlier, I had the luxury of spending time in the living rooms of some of the people here.

I do want to mention Judy Gillis, who is here with us. Judy was telling me how full of a summer and leading into the fall it is, with having her brilliant children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren visiting all summer, and them doing the same thing.

I have had the luxury of having many, many wonderful meals at the Gillis homestead. Judy is just a perfect example of one of the most kindest individuals PEI has to offer.

I just wanted to welcome you all to the gallery.

Thank you.

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

Statements by Members

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

### Grammy's Gifts

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

I rise today to highlight a new community initiative in my area called Grammy's Gifts.

Grammy's Gifts is an annual toy gift drive which collects toys and gifts for kids and families in need during the holiday season. This initiative was just created this year in memory of Louise Weeks, who was known for her generosity, her big heart, and willingness to help anyone she could. The family of Louise, led by her grandson, Tayler Weeks, felt this was the perfect way to honour her memory.

There's an interesting connection to the Legislative Assembly. Louise is the great-aunt of our very own Minister of Social Development and Housing, and also the great-aunt of my children. Try and make the connection there.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** At Christmas time, Louise would dress up in a Santa Claus outfit and deliver Christmas presents to kids and families.

Throughout the month of December, her grandchildren will collect toys and gifts for the toy drive to honour their Grammy's legacy. Donations can be dropped off to Allan Weeks Real Estate Company in Hunter River or contact one of the family members to arrange toys for pickup. Money towards the purchase of toys can be transferred straight to [tayler@allanweeks.com](mailto:tayler@allanweeks.com).

The Grammy's Gifts initiative is a great way to give back and honour the legacy of just an extremely fine community person. I congratulate the members of Louise's family for honouring her memory this way.

I encourage Islanders who are able to give to consider supporting Grammy's Gifts this year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Mermaid Women's Institute

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

With your indulgence, I'd like to recognize a few people who have joined us in the gallery today.

I would like to welcome members from the Mermaid Women's Institute. We have five members of the current 12 members that are with the Women's Institute. I'd like to recognize Lucy Hickey, Judy Gillis, Darcy Lanthier, Barb Dalziel, and Donna Gallant. I'd also like to welcome Ron Gallant, who's here as well.

It's a pleasure to rise today to recognize the Mermaid Women's Institute. It was on a cold February evening in 1950 that 13 women came together in the small one-room schoolhouse to form the institute. From its inception, the Women's Institute has played a fundamental role in the life of its community, particularly in the areas of education, agriculture, citizenship, and public health.

This summer, I had the opportunity to attend an event hosted by the Women's Institute to celebrate and launch the book written by Donna Gallant, *Mermaid Moments: A History of the Community of Mermaid, Prince Edward Island*. This book was authored by the member Donna Gallant and was funded by the institute in celebration of their 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

This gathering was special. Donna read some excerpts from her book, some of her favourite stories to share, and the room was filled with current and former residents of Mermaid and the surrounding areas. There were many, many stories shared that day.

The book is full of little stories and hidden treasures: A hidden lake, a mermaid balloon, fox farmers, a tornado, and a \$300 fruitcake are just some of the special local stories that were shared. The famous fruitcake recipe is even within the book, if you would like to purchase the book to be able to bake that cake.

The books can be purchased for \$25 from any of the Mermaid Women's Institute members, and I know that they have some here with them today. They're also going to be available at the Donagh Craft Fair, which is happening this weekend. They'll also be available at The Bookmark.

The members are currently canvassing the community for funds to replace the Mermaid signs at both ends of the community, so they're still hard at work. One of those signs, I understand, may have gone missing after Fiona. If anybody has seen them, please reach out to one of the members.

Women's Institute has a deep history in this province, and it is my pleasure to recognize the Mermaid Women's Institute and its members for 72 years of service to their community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Now I want cake.

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

### **Nature-based Solutions to Climate Change**

**Ms. Bell:** Maybe I'll have a snack later.

Mr. Speaker, nature-based solutions to climate change involve conserving, restoring, or better managing our ecosystems to remove CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere. They also provide a wide range of other important benefits such as cleaner air and water, economic benefits, and increased biodiversity.

Nature-based solutions are the key to sustainable development, plans, and policies by harmonizing conservation, economic and trade policies, and respecting the needs of the community, with a focus on food, water, and sustainable employment.

At COP27, among the glitzy pavilions of the wealthy countries, businesses, and

organizations, there were also thousands of smaller presenters: development agencies and grassroots organizations who spoke with a common voice on a necessity of nature-based solutions to address climate change. Whether they were from Rwanda, Togo, Sweden, or Indonesia, they all agreed on the same basic criteria: there needs to be an overarching vision for change that is best achieved through a series of interconnected projects under common objectives.

Infrastructure investment should take into account climate impact and mitigation, like watershed management for a road project. You need to involve the community, stakeholders, and beneficiaries from the beginning of the project to make sure you're meeting their needs and get their support. Don't tell them what you're going to do; ask them what they need.

You need to include ecosystem and biodiversity project requirements in the funding criteria and project design from the beginning to make sure that diverse partners can bring new solutions to old problems.

Decarbonization is critical to our future, not just through technology but through transformation of systems and the way we think about what our community needs. Solutions to climate change challenges do not have to be technologically advanced or incredibly expensive to be successful. We do, however, have to be committed to change in how we think about and address projects if we want to really achieve the outcomes that the children of the world deserve.

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 very much, Mr. Speaker.

The rules around development and environmental protection are an absolute mess in this province.

Last week and the week before, we spoke about Point Deroche, which is a development that might be following the letter of the law, but certainly is not following the spirit of the law and clearly does not meet the standard that many Islanders expect for protecting our coastline.

### **Laws/regulations to protect Island**

A question to the Minister of Agriculture and Land: You say that no laws were broken with this development, but what does the fact that this level of destruction can be allowed to occur say about whether our laws and regulations are actually protecting our Island?

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

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

The way that we develop along the waterfront on Prince Edward Island is something that requires a major adaptation, and through our Climate Adaptation Plan, we talked at how we would look at the policies, the regulations, where you can build, where you can't build, how close you can build, what you can do there.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere talked about some of the presentations at COP and using nature, and I think we have to look at where we can create natural barriers where possible.

At this time, our law doesn't really prevent the type of development happening out of there, but I would agree, it doesn't mean that we shouldn't look at how we can do better. Our climate adaptation lays out that exact strategy that we're going to tackle: when, where, and how you can develop along the waterfront.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you.

A different minister, but I, in some ways, appreciate the answer because it was very illuminating. I believe the minister said there that the laws do not prevent people from doing what is happening in Point Deroche. That points to a serious issue with the laws that we have in this province.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** In Fairview, in my own district, a large development just came to my attention. It involves significant excavation and land work, including some that is clearly within the buffer zone.

The Department of Agriculture and Land has confirmed that no permits exist for this development, despite its advanced state; no building permits, no development permits, no buffer zone activity permits, nothing.

The municipal government for this area, which is the new West River municipality, will soon be taking over regulation of new developments like this, but for now, it still lies in the hands of government, of the Department of Agriculture and Land.

### **Improper process re: Fairview**

A question to that minister: Are you aware of this situation and if so, what are you going to do about this blatant side-stepping of proper process?

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

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

There's a lot to digest there and I want to go back to two weeks ago when the Leader of the Opposition was accusing people of breaking the law. Now he at least admits that we were right when we said the law didn't cover what he says it covered back two weeks ago. We are able to enlighten through the Legislative Assembly, which is fortunate for the opposition and you get to learn some things someday.

The way that work happens in the buffer zone, because it is legal, companies who work in a buzzer zone, in particular, have a blanket permit, which means they have taken the program and the course work that we require them to take to work in the buffer

zone, so they understand how we want things applied.

They notify our department when they intend to do work in there and we quite often would check in to make sure that they were doing it the way that we ask.

When it comes time to build, that's when they would go to the agriculture minister's department and ask for a permit to actually build something with. When they work in the buffer zone, they work with us.

An individual can also work in the buffer zone if they get permission from government. From our department, they would have to request permission to work in the buffer zone. They would have to say what they were going to do and we would either approve or deny, based on the information they were telling us. Work that happens with machinery is generally covered under a blanketing permit.

What I said in this Legislature before and I'll say it again, for companies who don't do the right thing in the buffer zone and that we're unhappy with, they will lose that ability to work in the buffer zone. I believe for many companies, that's a big financial loss.

Our department is quite willing and ready to enforce that when action needs to be taken.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Well, the minister may have thought that there was a lot to unpack in my question but there's an awful lot more to unpack in that incredibly lengthy answer.

The Coastal Property Guide, which is a publication of this government, states quite clearly that almost nothing is allowed to happen within a buffer zone, unless it is permitted by this government.

And there's the crux of this matter, that ministers have the discretion to overrule the rules and the regulations and the laws that we have, and that's where this problem is.

There is one specific case, that what we just talked about, which the minister didn't respond to whatsoever, was a particular case in my own district, but it's just an example of the haphazard and the opaque permitting processing that happens across much, particularly, of rural Prince Edward Island.

There's no opportunity for public input or concerns to be raised if a project is essentially already built and approved before anybody becomes aware of it, before any permits have been issued.

But this development will probably just be awarded a permit after the fact because that's happened so many times before.

### **Granting of permits after work completed**

A question the Minister of Agriculture and Land: If you grant development permits for projects that are only submitted a long time after work has been done, what is stopping others from proceeding like this all across our province?

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

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

I feel like I need to correct the Leader of the Opposition again. I'm sure two weeks from now in a Question Period, he will be using the right terminology because I'll help him understand it.

Those types of files would never make it to a minister's desk. Anybody who sat as the minister of environment would know that I don't issue permits, I don't deny permits, I don't get involved. I have regulatory staff who are highly trained individuals who sign an oath of office, who uphold the laws of the Province to the best of their abilities without political interference.

Quite frankly, it scares me to think what would happen if a Green government came in and tried to direct officials in Prince Edward Island to do things that they want them to do versus follow the laws and be upstanding to Islanders of Prince Edward Island.

Political interference would be just like it was back in the Wade MacLauchlan era.

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

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Oh, my goodness, Mr. Speaker, what a rich Orwellian answer that was. My goodness.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** To suggest – the law says the minister’s discretion; the minister. And of course, there are staff involved in that. We all know that, but it’s at the discretion of the minister.

Come on, you know better than that.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** We hear from the Premier of this province all the time about legislative situations that his government has inherited. We just heard another one from the minister of the environment right there and that he is frustrated by.

Yesterday, it was the laws regulating Maritime Electric, and as my colleague, who put the question to the Premier yesterday put it, Maritime Electric is a regulated utility. You are a majority government. You can change the law. You can fix this if you want to. That’s true in this case, as well.

#### **Permitted activities within buffer zone (further)**

Question to the Premier: When are you going to fix the absolutely awful situation regarding the chaotic planning and development process on Prince Edward Island that is ripe for abuse and patronage, that reflects so poorly on your government, and angers thousands of Islanders?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Mr. Speaker, there’s a lot of hyper-partisanship in here today, it seems. Let me see if I can dial it back a little bit.

I actually listen to the questions and I listen to the answers. What I heard the hon. minister of environment say is that we just released a Climate Adaptation Plan, and that

we know we need to make some changes in some of these areas that he’s talked about.

We’re committed to doing that. We’re going to do it. That’s our job. That’s what we’re here for.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Good thing (Indistinct)

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

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

It’s not only in the country that our shorefront is under attack. Right under our nose, on Colonel Gray Drive in Charlottetown-Brighton, the owner of a shorefront lot has stripped all the trees right to the waterline with little action from building officials, despite protests by all the neighbours.

#### **Buffer zone legislation and regulation (further)**

Question to the Minister of Agriculture and Land: While this is, in part, a city issue, the city is following your provincial laws and regulations. Why do you continue to allow such damaging developments to proceed?

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

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

My understanding from reading *The Guardian* this morning, and from my own staff, is that it’s not proceeding. It’s actually stopped. When staff went in to talk to the developer – well, what do you want us to do? Put a lock on every road on Prince Edward Island? Do you want us to put staff on every road to make sure that somebody doesn’t cut a tree?

Ridiculous. The Leader of the Opposition is completely ridiculous at how he would waste taxpayers’ money to try to accomplish simple goals that we can get accomplished by working with developers, which is what we’re doing. There’s nothing happening in Brighton because we are working with them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Altass:** Last week saw not one, but two very serious workplace injuries at different locations of Curran & Briggs, with one resulting in a tragic death. It is critical that we do everything we can to ensure PEI workplaces are safe and no lives are lost due to workplace injury.

After repeated calls from the PEI Federation of Labour to increase information sharing and transparency around workplace deaths, the previous minister stated last sitting that this is something his department was working on.

### **Transparency of workplace deaths**

Question to the minister: What changes have been made since then to increase transparency around workplace deaths so we can do everything possible to prevent another tragedy like this from ever happening again on PEI?

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

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

It is a very sad situation; two incidents in one week. My thoughts and prayers go to the family of those victims of that. I know Workers Compensation was on site right away to investigate this. I'll make sure that the information is provided to the federation as quickly as possible.

Thank you.

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

**Ms. Altass:** There is a larger issue here around access and transparency around workplace deaths that has been an ongoing question, so I expect a policy answer from the minister on what is going to happen.

The previous minister of economic growth, tourism and culture stated six occupational health and safety officers conduct about 3,000 health and safety inspections within workplaces on PEI each year.

### **Proactive workplace inspections**

Question to the minister: How many of these inspections are proactive or unannounced?

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

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

For the information on these past deaths, it's only been a few days. We'll get that out as fast as we can. I'll get the information back too, on the policy and the timelines.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Altass:** Again, my question is not specifically about the incident. I'm looking at the bigger picture here and what can we do to prevent injury and workplace deaths. My question was about occupational health and safety and what we're doing as a preventative measure.

I'm still not getting any answers. This is a serious issue and something that the minister should care very much about. Compared to other provinces, industry experts have shared concerns that PEI's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* is woefully incomplete in several areas that could put workers at risk.

For example, it contains no definition of a supervisor, no legislative requirements for pre-start health and safety reviews of warehouse or manufacturing equipment, and lack standardized, government-approved fall protection training.

### **Pressing issues in OHS act**

Question to the minister: What would you identify as the most pressing issues with PEI's *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, and what are you doing to address them?

**Ms. Bernard:** Good question.

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

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

I know the staff is out doing checks all the time to ensure the safe workplaces. I'll bring the data back. I don't have the stats in front of me, but I'll happily bring the answers back for the member in the next day or two.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Altass:** So, that question was about legislation, about the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. The minister needs to become familiar with all of the acts that fall under his portfolio and have answers to questions about the acts. You need to understand it. It's so important; we're talking about people's lives, workers' lives, and their health and safety.

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

**Ms. Altass:** It is also concerning that PEI is the only province without a construction safety association. I don't know if the minister was aware of that.

Labour shortages in construction are critical. They're at critical levels, and PEI competes with every other province for these workers.

### **Safety in construction industry**

Minister, how are you supporting the construction industry so it can be as safe as possible.

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

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

Of course, the construction industry right now is in a boom, and we are trying to attract more construction workers, and we want them to be safe. We're constantly working with the Construction Association to ensure that all the safety measures are taken place, and we will ensure that we continue to build on that going forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Altass:** Mr. Speaker, just wanting something doesn't get it done. You need to have a plan. You need to have a strategy. You need to move forward.

A recent study found that workers with access to paid sick leave were 28% less likely than workers without access to paid sick leave to be injured, with the greatest differences occurring in high-risk sectors and occupations.

### **Support for paid sick days (further)**

Question to the minister: Decreased risk of workplace injuries, particularly in high-risk sectors like construction, is yet another reason to support paid sick leave.

**Ms. Lund:** Yes.

**Ms. Altass:** Do you support legislated paid sick days for PEI workers?

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

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

I don't think anybody in this House doesn't support paid sick days for workers, it's just depending on how we get there, and we're waiting for the comprehensive review to be done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

AccessAbility Supports has grown to include mental health as well as physical health, which is really great news. The one problem is that AccessAbility Supports will not cover mental health counselling or therapy services, which is concerning given that is the No. 1 way, most effective way, to cope with severe mental health outcomes.

### **Lack of counselling coverage**

Question to the Minister of Social Development and Housing: Why does AccessAbility Supports not cover counselling services?

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

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

I've asked this exact same question in my department, and what I can tell you is that health provides those supports, so AccessAbility Supports, under my department, doesn't, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I've heard from parents whose children have had great success dealing with severe childhood trauma and other mental health issues at Serene View Ranch. Unfortunately, AccessAbility Supports will not cover this service. Parents are told to go to Health PEI, but in order to do that, they need a referral from a family doctor. For those who do not have a family doctor, that leaves some scrambling.

One family waited for a pediatrician to transcribe a letter for Health PEI for months.

### **Access to counselling for children**

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Can families access counselling or therapy service for children through health? And if so, why is there so much red tape for families trying desperately to get help for their children?

**Some Hon. Members:** Good question.

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

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

From my understanding, yes, exactly, health does that. But at the same time, one thing I've seen in my department is everybody deals with mental health issues in a different way, and I know we need to do whatever we can through our department to make sure we're able to allow people to access that.

One thing I've requested the department to go back to is health, and make sure that health and my department both work

together to make sure that we improve this system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I've met with the minister a few times on this, so I know he understands the issue. We both know that untreated trauma can cost an individual, as well as the system, very dearly, both financially and socially, throughout their whole lives.

A week ago, we heard the Premier mention the Brain Story, which is about building resiliency in the face of trauma, which I was really excited to hear. We talk about upstream mental health services on the regular in here, but again, it's all talk and there doesn't seem to be any action following up.

**Ms. Beaton:** Exactly.

### **Counselling and therapy re: AccessAbility**

**Ms. Bernard:** Question to the minister: Will you do the right thing for Islanders and do more than look into it? Cover mental health counselling and therapy services under the AccessAbility Supports program.

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

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

Hon. member, I assure you, there's a lot more than talk happening in through my department. We've been able to make significant gains over the last few months.

**Ms. Bernard:** What about (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacKay:** We know a lot of our policies are outdated. There's a complete review going through all that now.

I don't disagree with the hon. member at all. I certainly think there's a need here, and this is why we're working with the department of health to look at this. We need to make sure there's a program that works for individuals. That's one thing that we're

trying to do and hopefully we'll be able to do something soon.

Thank you.

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

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

For the 20<sup>th</sup> month in a row, PEI is leading the country with the highest annual inflation rate of 8.7%. In the simplest terms, a high inflation rate reduces your disposable income, and Islanders are paying that price.

One of the roles that government can play is combatting the burden of inflation and making sure the poorest aren't pushed further into poverty as a result.

### **Indexing government support to inflation**

Question for the Minister of Finance: Why haven't you indexed government supports like social assistance and AccessAbility rates to inflation?

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

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

**Mr. McLane:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank the hon. member for the question.

We have done some social assistance increases over the last while, again, which we'll do that. We understand that it's important, and obviously, the inflationary payments will hopefully soften the blow for Islanders.

Thank you.

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

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

Giving people extra money that they should have been getting 10 years ago isn't going to help them if you're not indexing the rate.

Island households are struggling to buy gas, food, and pay their rent with the cost of living increases. One of the most effective ways you can support Islanders with the high cost of living would be to indexing our

tax brackets as well. Without indexing, Islanders are paying more in taxes even though their purchasing power doesn't change.

**An Hon. Member:** Exactly.

**Ms. Bell:** Government is pocketing that extra tax revenue and they're banking huge surpluses instead.

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

### **Indexing tax brackets for Islanders**

**Ms. Bell:** Question for the Minister of Finance: Your predecessor told Islanders to tighten their belts. Are you okay with taking money out of their pockets too?

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

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

Obviously, it is a challenging time for Islanders. One of the things I've actually had the department do is actually look at inflation and the history of inflation on PEI. Again, from 2001 to 2019, PEI has the highest share of household expenditures that relate to home heating of any province in PEI, so I think it's important that some of our energy efficiency programs reduce that reliance on that so that we can soften the blow of the inflation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. McNeilly:** That was good. That was good.

**Mr. Henderson:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

I've been contacted by many residents of West Prince, even those from the riding of Alberton-Bloomfield, with growing concerns about the shortage West Prince has experienced with Children's Tylenol.

Residents say they had to go to Summerside or even Charlottetown to find a bottle, as there's none to be found in West Prince pharmacies.

Health Canada announced Monday that Canada will be receiving a foreign shipment of children's acetaminophen within the coming weeks.

### **Allocation and shipment of Tylenol**

Question to the minister of health: What will PEI's allocation be of this shipment, and will your department be involved in ensuring there is an equitable distribution across the province, or is this another case where your government has fumbled the football and left West Prince out again?

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

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

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

**Speaker:** Order! Order!

Minister has the floor.

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

I actually was contacted by the federal Minister of Health on the weekend just in particular with regard to the shortage of Tylenol that has been experienced.

Yes, I don't have the exact amount; I will certainly bring it back as to the allotment that the Province of PEI will be receiving. But I do want to take the opportunity to thank the federal minister and the federal government as well for their action on this.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Henderson:** And I probably insulted the Cleveland Browns by saying that they're the Cleveland Browns of government over there, Mr. Speaker, but this is not a recent issue.

The shortage began in the summer, and the Public Health Agency of Canada issued an alert regarding the continued shortage in early October.

It's not only affecting our over-the-counter supply but health care providers around the

country have been sounding the alarm for some time.

**Minister of health:** Has Health PEI voiced concern of PEI supply of this medication at our acute care facilities or are they equipped to handle the demand in case that we don't get an adequate supply to meet the province's needs? We're seeing child flu season is right upon us and it's getting serious.

**Ms. Bernard:** It is.

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

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

I am not a fan of the Cleveland Browns so I really don't know what their history is there.

But with that, as I referenced before, certainly the concerns here within the province, right across the country, working with a partner, the partner, the federal government – partner is something that the third party doesn't seem to have all that much appreciation for, to be honest.

**Mr. McNeilly:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Hudson:** But by working with our partners, the federal government, as I had indicated, they have secured substantial supplies which will be coming to the Province of PEI, duly allocated. As I had indicated, Mr. Speaker, the exact volume that we will be receiving, I'll certainly bring that information back.

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Obviously, preparation is the key, whether it's trying to win a football game or it's to try to provide services to Islanders here.

The other issue is this shortage – of individuals are hoarding medication that does become available within the flu season ramping up are already a major contributor to creating the shortage. It is anticipated that the demand is going to outpace supply.

### **Distribution of Children's Tylenol**

Will the government be proactive on this and find a way to distribute so that all Islanders can access this medication in your home pharmacy and these pharmacies in West Prince can get their fair share of this medication as we see this recent spike in the flu season? We don't want to have to drive to Summerside and Charlottetown – we have to go to get our Red Cross cheques, we might as well pick up a supply of acetaminophen.

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

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

I'll go back to the comment that I had made in my previous answer with regard to the importance of partnerships. There is no better example of the partnership between a government and our pharmacists, right across the province.

We will work with them when the supplies come in to make sure that pharmacies right across this province have their allocations, and that, yes, that they don't have to drive from O'Leary to Summerside or Summerside to O'Leary or Alberton.

We'll have it worked out as compared to what we used to see from the previous administration.

Thank you.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

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

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

This year, emergency departments and pediatric units across the country are dealing with record numbers of children presenting with respiratory illnesses: COVID, influenza, and RSV.

This can be scary for children and families.

### **Respiratory illnesses in children**

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: How has Health PEI planned for

having our youngest Islanders presenting in greater numbers at our emergency rooms?

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

**Mr. Hudson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do thank the hon. member for the question.

We see what has taken place at Sick Children's Hospital in Toronto. That is a situation that, certainly, we don't want to be facing and can't give a guarantee that we won't, but I think you look across the board of initiatives that we need to take, the preventative measures that we need to take, and that is overall vaccinations to decrease the risk for all Islanders and the impact that tentatively that, without being vaccinated, the risk that it will pose and the burdens that it will pose on our health care system.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. McNeilly:** I would agree and encourage everybody to get vaccinated, but we're dealing with an immediate crisis here.

Wait times in the ERs across the country are long and have been growing over the last few weeks. History has shown that what happens in other provinces follows here on Prince Edward Island.

A concerned constituent in my district reached out with her deep concerns that our emergency department pediatric units are under-resourced to be able to deal with the influx of respiratory illness in children.

### **Plan for surge capacity in ERs**

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: With the frequent closures of rural ERs in Prince Edward Island, it is often left to the PCH and QEH, who themselves are often short-staffed due to shortage of health care workers in the province, to respond to the extra request for care.

Question: What operational steps has Health PEI taken to deal with surge capacity at our ERs?

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

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

I think we've seen it before here in this Legislature, that on the one hand, that the third party, that the opposition doesn't want us to be involved in operational matters. On the other hand, we have the hon. member saying that we should be.

I know that we have challenges, certainly. That's the reason that we are doing things different and looking at and will be doing things differently with regard to the provision of health care services.

With that though, we have dedicated staff. We have tremendous staff in health and wellness and Health PEI who plan for these and have contingencies in place for all events.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. McNeilly:** You're the minister of health. You have to communicate with Health PEI. I need answers on these. This is too important right now. It's happening in, like you said, Toronto, Ottawa, and recently, we hear that in Halifax, the IWK, a place where we rely on for our children that need intensive care, is seeing record numbers of patients every single day. This is very concerning, minister.

### **Pediatric ICU capacity issues**

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: PEI does not have any pediatric ICU capacity whatsoever. Have you or Health PEI or have you communicated and discussed with the IWK regarding this capacity problem for care for other people in other provinces around like ours? What are we supposed to do if the IWK can't handle Island children that need that support, minister?

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

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

I do give credit to the hon. member. I think that the concerns, the points that he raised here are certainly very valid points, without a doubt.

With that though, yes, staff from health and wellness, but certainly Health PEI, our great staff there, we have great relationships with our facilities, whether it's in Moncton, whether it's in St. John's, whether it's the QEII in Halifax, or the IWK as the hon. member has referenced. Discussions, contingency plans are always being addressed with the knowledge that – what the future may hold. We can hope for the best, but with vaccination and so on, prepare for the worst.

Thank you.

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

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

Yesterday, I asked the minister of health how West Prince will recruit physicians after his government pushes through amendments to the *Health Services Payment Act* which will only twist the knife they have already put in rural health care.

He said he had no idea what I'm talking about regarding his government removing an incentive for physicians to work at the Western Hospital ER.

### **Revoking incentives for WH physicians**

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Are you saying to this House, on public record, that there was never a program revoked that provided the financial incentive for physicians to fill shifts at Western Hospital?

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

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

It's unfortunate that the hon. member wasn't a bit clearer, from my perspective, in his questioning yesterday because my response

on that was with regard to the recruitment return-of-service incentive that is provided for West Prince and for Eastern Kings as well, that was increased by \$25,000 recently.

I do know that, since he has provided clarity to his questions from yesterday, which I do appreciate him providing that clarity, yes, that there was an incentive put in place for a short time period with regard to the emergency department coverage at Western Hospital.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Perry:** I don't understand how he suddenly knows about the incentive today but he had no idea what I was talking about yesterday.

**Mr. Henderson:** Yeah, unreal.

**Mr. Perry:** I'll tell you what, I'll table an article here shortly on that.

In that article, there's a quote from our big city centralization talking head Dr. Gardam, stating that, "I don't want to incentivize people to work in a place where, from a population perspective, we need them the least."

Well, bless his soul.

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

**Access to emergency health care**

**Mr. Perry:** Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Is this what you think of your hometown, that our ability to access timely emergency health care is less important because we choose to live, we choose to raise our families –

**Speaker:** Question.

**Mr. Perry:** – and we choose to contribute to the small-town, rural communities that this province was built and prides itself on?

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

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

I do agree with a certain amount of what the hon. member brings forward, that yes, that we pride ourselves on what this great province of ours has been built upon, whether it's fisheries, whether it's agriculture.

With regard to the commitment to rural health care in PEI, I don't think that there has ever been a government that has shown greater commitment. Look at the – and I had referenced the other day –

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

**Mr. Hudson:** – the dollars that this government has committed on an ongoing basis to the Tignish Health Centre, the community health centres that are being constructed in West Prince and will be in the Montague area, and to wrap up, the commitment from this government, from myself as minister, for a new hospital in Kings County in Montague. Those are our commitments to rural health care.

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

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

**Mr. Henderson:** He was big on signs.

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

I pity the fact that he has to listen to himself talk all day long.

In the same article, it clearly states how this program, incentivize physicians to work at Western Hospital, was a government initiated program, not a Health PEI program, leaving one to assume that if government put it in there in the first place, only government could take it away. But once again, it's the talking head who's speaking about it.

**Accountability of minister of health**

Question to the minister: When will you stop hiding behind Dr. Gardam and take some accountability for the decisions that you are making?

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

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

There will never be a day that I hide behind Dr. Gardam or anybody else, and certainly not hiding behind the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

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

**Premier King:** You fired them all.

**Mr. McNeilly:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Hudson:** For the first time in years, we have two ED doctors, two fantastic ED doctors at Western Hospital –

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

**Mr. Hudson:** – something that the previous administration might have aspired to. I have no idea if they did or not, but they never came to the realization of having those two physicians working in our ED.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Premier:** Their phones didn't ring (Indistinct)

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

Safe, reliable roads are vital to our economic growth, to support our primary industries, and to serve the growing number of housing developments underway. We need to take dirt roads, and they need to be paved. I can think of Trout River Road. I can think of Buffalo Road. I can also think of parts of Millvale Road.

Today, I want to talk about the Mill Road, Route 254, which is one of the main north-south routes from the Confederation Bridge

to tourist destinations, many of them further north. It's often recommended by navigation systems like Google Maps. It's also the main access to the village of Emerald from Route 2.

The dirt section of the Mill Road has seen improvements in recent years, thank you very much, but it needs to be paved so it can handle the thousands of vehicles that travel it every year.

**Commitment to pave Mill Road in 2023**

Question to the minister of transportation: Will you publicly commit here today to paving the unpaved portion of the Mill Road in 2023?

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

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

**An Hon. Member:** More pavement. More pavement.

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

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

I think this was the road, the community actually had a billboard out telling the people to call myself.

I know you did approach me about this road for this summer. We weren't able to get it done this summer, but yes, we can look at doing it next summer. I don't see an issue with that.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

That is fantastic news. The residents will be so happy, and I am.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Another road in my district that is heavily travelled by tourists and local traffic alike is Route 13 from Hunter River to Cavendish. This is a popular road for cyclists –

**Mr. McNeilly:** Twin it.

**Mr. Trivers:** – and most tourists heading to visit Anne’s Land. Unfortunately, on a serious note, there have been fatalities in the past. There has been ongoing work, it started with the previous administration, to widen Route 13 from Hunter River up to Cavendish.

However, the work is not complete and the last stretch –

**Speaker:** Question.

**Mr. Trivers:** – that needs to be widened is arguably one of the most dangerous, but there was no work done on it in 2022 on this road.

**Speaker:** Question.

### **Commitment to improve Route 13 in 2023**

**Mr. Trivers:** Minister of transportation: Will you commit to completing the work to resurface and widen this final stretch of Route 13 during the 2023 work season?

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

**Mr. Henderson:** (Indistinct) election year.

**An Hon. Member:** Take from up west.

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

I see you’re shaking your head at me because I know you have a road that you would like to get some shoulders done on, which you’ve asked me about, and we are going to get that done next year as well.

**Speaker:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Deagle:** I see everyone’s hands going up here.

Yes, member, we will work to get that done next summer as well.

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

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

As we know, we’ve seen record tourism this year, and more and more people moving to our great Island, especially in District 18 Rustico-Emerald. The increased traffic and increased population in our small communities, as well as increased – unfortunately – traffic violations like speeding have often resulted in unsafe road conditions.

The implementation of speed limit changes, speed radar signs, and even traffic lights really need to be considered to improve traffic safety –

**Mr. McNeilly:** Overpass. Overpass.

### **Addition of traffic-calming measures**

**Mr. Trivers:** Question to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure: Will your department commit to adding traffic-calming measures to improve road safety in all our small rural communities prior to the next tourism season?

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

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

I know we did – I believe they’re installed, they might be installed already, three sets of radar feedback signs in your area already. I know you did make a request for a number of them. I can follow up and see where we’re at with the other requests.

Obviously, we can’t have them on every single road, because then they don’t quite have the same effect anymore, but I’ll follow up and will see where we’re at with those.

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

**Ms. Beaton:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Social Development and Housing announced last week that his department would be increasing the income thresholds for the Social Assistance Program. This further shows that ministers matter because other ministers haven’t bothered to review the thresholds of programs in their own portfolios.

### **Actions to increase income to programs**

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: When will Islanders see you take action and adjust the income criteria for dental and pharmacare programs that are in desperate need to be increased?

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

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

I do thank the hon. member for bringing that forward.

The member references pharmacare programs. You look at the formularies. Yes, we can do better there; we have done tremendously better there as well, adding over 18 drugs to the formulary, 20-some of them for oncology.

But I do certainly appreciate the question, and it is something, yes, that we will review, that we will look at.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

**Ms. Lund:** Mr. Speaker, I asked last week whether personal expenses ministers billed to taxpayers – things like trailer hitches and frequent carwashes, and in one case, car shampoo – had been returned to the public purse. It seems like if the answer to that was “yes”, it would’ve been easy to bring back information on this already.

#### **Return of ministers’ personal expenses (further)**

So, I’m going to ask the Minister of Finance again: Was the money returned or wasn’t it, and if it was, when?

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

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

I apologize to the member, that I did make that request to the department and the information has not come back to me but as soon as it (Indistinct) –

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

**Mr. McLane:** No, it has not. As soon as it comes back, I’ll certainly bring it back here.

Thank you.

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

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

So, we’ve determined that pavement lists are very important to this government.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Yes.

**Ms. Bernard:** Housing improvement lists, not so much.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Yes.

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

**Ms. Bernard:** I’ve been asking for a capital project priorities list from government-owned housing, for years. I keep getting told, “Yes, sure, it’s coming, sure you can have a copy.”

Yet, here I sit, empty handed, years later.

Two things: one, earlier this sitting, we learned that when the tenants called the department with issues, these issues are not documented; two, during Budget debate, we learned there is no capital project priorities list.

**An Hon. Member:** Shame.

**Ms. Bernard:** No wonder our publicly owned housing is in such horrific shape.

#### **Tabling of capital project priorities list**

Question to the Minister of Social Development and Housing: Is there a capital project priorities list that you can table here tomorrow, and if not, how in the world do you know what needs to be done?

**Ms. Beaton:** Exactly.

**Ms. Lund:** Great question.

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

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

Last week, once again, I said you can absolutely say anything in here. So, when the calls do come in from tenants, they are recorded. They are recorded. There is a list, and I will gladly take that list to you tomorrow, hon. member.

**An Hon. Member:** Thank you.

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

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

**Speaker:** Order! Order!

Almost sounds like we're on our last day or something.

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

**Speaker:** End of Question Period.

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

#### Statements by Ministers

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

#### **Congratulating School Board Trustees**

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

This morning I received the official results from Elections PEI and I rise today to congratulate our newly elected school board trustees for the Public Schools Branch and La Commission scolaire de langue française.

This government made a promise to reinstate elected school boards, providing Islanders a direct voice in our education system, empowering community leaders in the decision-making process, and building a stronger system for Island students.

*Je suis reconnaissante envers les nombreux dirigeants engagés et inspirants qui ont proposé leur candidature.*

There were 39 people who put their names on the ballot to serve as trustees. I am grateful for the many engaged and inspiring leaders that put their names forward to serve.

School bus trustees are advocates for students, teachers, and staff. They will

provide strategic direction, allocate resources, and support students, schools, and the entire community.

Trustees make a meaningful difference and I am confident that PEI's newest trustees will continue to uphold our outstanding education system.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to welcome the following individuals as school board trustees:

For the Public Schools Branch: Beverly Ann Boulter, Beckie Keezer, Rachel McCarthy, Jaclyn Massey, Heather Mullen, Amanda Blakeney, Wade Czank, and Patty van Diepen.

*Et pour la Commission scolaire de langue française :*

And for la Commission scolaire de langue française:

Francine Bernard, Bonnie Gallant, Tammy Shields, Gilles Benoit, Stephane Blanchard, Sarah Bernath, Bryan Burt, et/and Lynne Faubert.

*Toutes nos félicitations.*

Congratulations, and I look forward to working with all of you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

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

I would to thank the minister for bringing forward this statement. I add my name and my voice to congratulating all of the amazing people who have been elected to our school boards across the province. I definitely think this is a step in the right direction and it's a really positive move.

But I will say I heard from people who are running for school board election, right across the province, who were frustrated by the process, who believed there was an education campaign coming on this that never did seem to get rolled out. I think when we saw the results of the voter turnout, it was far lower than anyone in this House would have wanted to see.

While I'm so excited to see a return to elected school boards and I absolutely congratulate those who are going to serve in this role moving forward, I do think we need to reflect on what we can do to ensure that this process, in the future, sees higher voter engagement, higher voter turnout, so that the people who are putting their name forward get the robust debate that they're looking for.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I want to say congratulations to all those people who won. Any time you put your name forward in an elected capacity, it's very nerve-racking. I want to say congratulations to them.

But I remain – we talked about this in the debate in the Legislature. I thought this was an exclusionary process. I don't think it was inclusive at all. I think that we missed the mark on how the process was done and I voiced my concerns in here on the floor of the Legislature.

There was low voter turnout and I don't know if anybody of colour was even participating in this whole process. I think there are major steps that we missed, major steps that we missed in here to make it inclusive. I want to work with government to do just that in the future.

Congratulations on those who won and I look forward to working with the minister on this file, which I've talked to her about before.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **New License Plate Designs**

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

The Province of PEI is introducing a new design for its license plates. The design of

the plate is in a retro look for plates that had been issued in the 1980s and '90s. As we start to get into six-digit plates, the new design will ensure the clarity of the license plate number, due to its simple design. These plates will be available for all types of vehicles and for the first time, there will be a distinct plate for electric vehicles.

Since 2013, the province has provided an option for Wildlife Conservation plates, with monies from those plates being donated to the Wildlife Conservation Fund. These plates have been popular and will still be available for Islanders in the new plate design.

Also new this year will be an option to purchase a Canada Food Island plate. All proceeds from the sale of these plates will be donated to Island food banks.

The cost will remain at \$5 for a new license plate and \$10 for a conservation or Canada's Food Island plate. The plates will be available at Access PEI locations across the province.

People will not be required to purchase a new design plate upon renewal if their current plate is in good condition. We anticipate seeing these new plates on Island roads by the end of this year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

A nice announcement by the minister. Thank you very much, minister. We've certainly had some very attractive and unique license plate designs over the years. I'm interested to see what the retro is going to look like. Are we going to reproduce one of the ones that we had before or is a new version that looks like it's from the '70s or '80 or whatever? That's kind of nice.

I'm also really pleased to hear that the conservancy plates, the Nature Conservancy plates will still be available. Very popular throughout the Island. I don't know what

percentage of cars on PEI have them but I would say it's a pretty healthy number. That's a big form of income for the Wildlife Conservation Fund. I'm really glad to hear that's going to continue.

Again, we're moving to six digits. I mean, it's a sign of how many cars there are here on Prince Edward Island. Of course, they will have to be scrunched up a little bit closer, I guess, but I'm sure they'll still be absolutely recognizable. I look forward to seeing this on the plates and I thank the minister very much for the announcement today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

This does sound like a good announcement. I do look at the situation where our whole concept of our license plates sort of gives a bit of an indication of the personality of our province. It also gives us the opportunity to promote things of a general nature. I hope that's considered, too, when the minister comes up with this new design.

I think some of the ones – I think there was one license plate, it's actually a fairly rare one, I think it says something about elite seed potatoes and foxes, I think, or silver foxes on the – then there was another come out with “seat belts save” to try to get a message out there.

I'm not sure what the minister might have in mind. It might be “try to save health care in PEI” –

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

**Mr. Henderson:** – or find a better football team, Mr. Speaker. But anyway, hope they come up with something.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

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

**Speaker:** Order! Order!

**An Hon. Member:** The west wants in.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** Okay, members.

I'm sure you remember “The Place to be in '73”.

**An Hon. Member:** There we go, yeah.

**Premier King:** No (Indistinct)

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

**An Hon. Member:** Some of us do.

**Speaker:** Okay, Premier.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

#### Tabling of Documents

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

By Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table Health PEI 2021-2022 annual report for the period ending March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West  
Royalty.

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

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a CTV News Atlantic article, *It's just chaos in here all the time: IWK sees record number of patients*, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-  
Victoria Park.

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

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a CBC article entitled, *Think housing prices are too high? The rental market is even worse with no relief in sight*. This contains evidence, despite the former minister's assertions that we have the strongest rent controls in the country, PEI is actually leading the country in rent increases. We're up a shocking 70% 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 Tignish-Palmer Road.

**Mr. Perry:** Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a Global News article titled, *'Mind boggling': ERs big and small across Canada struggle amid staffing crisis*, in which you will find information regarding an incentive for physicians to pick up shifts at Western Hospital being removed and very clearly outlines Health PEI's CEO Dr. Gardam's opinion on rural health care and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

**Ms. Altass:** Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a summary of our consultations on paid sick leave legislation 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 Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

**Ms. Altass:** Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table PEI's Special Leave Fund and Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit, which is summary information gathered by Ryan Reddin, Director of Parliamentary Research, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from

Mermaid-Stratford, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

**Ms. Altass:** Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the Policy Analysis and Technical Review of Proposed Official Opposition Bill – Amendments to the *Employment Standards Act* Paid Sick Leave. This is feedback we received from the department on the first draft of the bill to provide workers with paid sick leave and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

**Ms. Altass:** Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a Paid Sick Leave Briefing Note, 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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability, following the receipt of the committee's report on committee activities on November 15, 2022, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Winsloe, that the report of the committee be adopted.

Since it's last report for the Legislative Assembly, your committee has met 13 times. Six of those meetings we're held in regard to Hurricane Fiona. As a result, your committee is pleased to make the following recommendations to members of the Legislative Assembly.

Recommendations on the topic of species at risk.

1. Your committee recommends government immediately create an advisory committee for species at risk.

2. Your committee recommends that government work to take an ecosystem-based approach to species-at-risk conservation. Further, your committee recommends government ensure there are adequate resources within the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action to do so.

3. Your committee recommends that government work to further protect species-at-risk with either specific legislation or amendments to existing legislation such as the *Wildlife Conservation Act*.

4. Your committee recommends that government prioritize the creation of a provincial land use plan as it will be key in the effort to reach the goal of a Net Zero province by 2040.

Here are some specific recommendations on the topic of land use planning. This is our fifth recommendation.

5. Your committee recommends that government allow virtual participation through livestreaming and/or video conferencing at the November 2022 lobster bait forum.

6. Your committee recommends government consider providing supports for the aquaculture industry to diminish the damage caused by future weather events as there is a need to strengthen leasing policy.

Number seven, now we're getting into some of the recommendations regarding the impacts of Hurricane Fiona.

7. Your committee recommends government consider supporting the prioritization of power restoration to seafood processing facilities in the event of power outages. Further, your committee recommends that government support industry in the creation of a plan for situations where the power cannot be restored for over a week.

8. Your committee recommends that government consider ways to support the agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture

industries to find new and creative approaches to employee retention.

9. Your committee recommends that government consider creating employee support programs for those in the agriculture and fisheries industries ahead of future extreme weather events. Your committee recommends this with the expectation that doing so will allow fully developed support programs to be ready when extreme weather events occurs.

10. Your committee recommends government commence the process to establish business risk management programs for the farmed fishing and aquaculture industries.

We're talking about some sort of insurance here, which does not exist now.

11. Your committee recommends that government ensure resources are available and easily accessible to those in the agriculture industry who have suffered as a result of Hurricane Fiona.

12. Your committee recommends government support the creation of climate adaption plans for the agriculture and fisheries industries. Further, your committee recommends that government find ways to incentivize farmers to adapt to climate smart infrastructure.

13. Your committee recommends government support the development storm preparedness standards to strengthen businesses and leases against the impacts of extreme weather events.

We're talking about the aquaculture industry here.

Further, your committee encourages government to assist in the creation of emergency plans that can be implemented during future storms, and to assist with the resulting destruction.

14. Your committee recommends that government ensure there are adequate resources within the Department of Fisheries and Communities to create and administer storm preparedness and emergency plans.

15. Your committee recommends government launch a campaign in collaboration with Parks Canada to educate Islanders on how to protect local ecosystems.

16. Your committee recommends government provide core operational funding and additional project-based funding for the PEI Woodlot Owners Association to act as the community partner and coordinator in woodlot management and recovery.

Right now, the focus of the department, of course, is on publicly owned lands, not private lands, and that's where the PEI Woodlot Owners Association would come in.

Your committee would like to see specific provisions for public training.

17. Your committee recommends government review and expand current tree seedling programs to ensure the inclusion of varieties that make up the Acadian Forest.

We needed something that really needs to happen.

18. Your committee recommends that government develop programming to include incentives for the safe and likely unprofitable harvest of damaged forestry woodlots.

The committee is worried that if it's unprofitable to harvest from damaged woodlots, it won't happen, and that's what these incentive programs would be all about.

19. Your committee recommends government create labour program supports and incentives for woodlot management and tree planting.

Only four more left.

20. Your committee recommends that government review the number of service providers approved under the Forest Enhancement Program (FEP).

We need more people that can help out woodlot owners.

21. Your committee recommends government create a coastal erosion program. Further, your committee recommends that government ensure there are adequate department resources to implement and enforce such a program.

22. Your committee recommends that government consider developing a support program that is accessible for companies those with more than 20 employees and \$2 million revenue. Your committee further recommends that relevant stakeholders be consulted in the creation of the program.

And lastly.

23. Your committee recommends that government commit to extended access to supports for those in the agriculture, forestry and aquaculture industries as the damage from Hurricane Fiona is not fully realized yet.

In fact, it could be two, three years down the road, when they need the help to recover from Hurricane Fiona.

So, in conclusion:

Your committee thanks all those who have shared their knowledge, expertise and passion during this reporting period. Special thanks to all those who made themselves available on short notice for the series of emergency meetings on the topic of Hurricane Fiona and its impact on the province.

Your committee recognizes the work of the Standing Committee on Health and Social Development as well as the Standing Committee on Education and Economic Growth who have also conducted their own series of meetings on Hurricane Fiona as it relates to their mandates.

Your committee would like to thank members of all those committees as well for their work.

Also, a special thanks to the Legislative Assembly staff, especially our committee clerk for her tremendous efforts to bring this report to the floor in record time.

Finally, your committee would like to lend their support to all individuals, families and

industries impacted by Hurricane Fiona and look forward to watching the province build back stronger.

It is a pleasure to table this report, it is lengthy, and it's got a lot in it, and I look forward to seeing those recommendations implemented in the future.

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

**Speaker:** Is there anyone else?

Anyone else that would like to speak to the report?

Shall it carry? Carried.

That was one busy committee.

#### Orders Other Than Government

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

**Ms. Beaton:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, that the 39<sup>th</sup> order of the day be now read.

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

**Clerk:** Order 19, *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (No. 4)* (Bill No. 128), in committee.

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

**Ms. Beaton:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

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

The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, to chair the Committee of the Whole House, please.

**Chair (Perry):** The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intitled *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (No. 4)*.

A request has been made to bring a stranger on to the floor.

Shall it be granted? Granted.

Would you please state your name and position for Hansard?

**Nathan Hood:** I'm Nathan Hood, Senior Policy Advisor to the official opposition.

**Chair:** Thank you very much. Welcome, Nathan.

Hon. members, this bill has already been on the floor. It is currently under debate. I'm trying to go back here in my notes.

**Ms. Altass:** Chair?

**Chair:** Yes, promoter?

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

I do actually have an amendment I would like to bring to this legislation.

**Chair:** Sure.

**Ms. Altass:** We definitely appreciated the conversation when we brought this to the floor last week and acknowledged that there were some concerns brought forward by the minister around piecemeal workers being able to access this support, as well as around our rate of pay calculation.

For me, the goal here is to produce the very best piece of legislation that we possibly can, so I acknowledge those concerns and we have drafted an amendment to address those concerns directly. I would like to put that forward now, if I could.

**Chair:** Sure, if you would please just read it into Hansard.

**Ms. Altass:** Yeah, sorry. I need – you have it here?

**Nathan Hood:** Yeah, you can take one of those.

**Ms. Altass:** I get one of the official ones.

Thank you.

Moved that

Subsection 3(3) of Bill 128 is amended by the deletion of proposed section 22.2(5) and the substitution of the following:

Rate of pay

(5) An employer must pay an employee who takes leave under subsection (4) an amount in money equal to at least the amount calculated by multiplying the period of the leave and the average day's pay, where the average day's pay is determined by the formula

$$\text{amount paid} \div \text{by days worked}$$

where

“amount paid” is the amount paid or payable to the employee for the work that is done during and pay that is earned within the 30 calendar day period preceding the leave, excluding pay in lieu of vacation, gratuities or benefits, less any amounts paid or payable for overtime, and “days worked” is the number of days the employee worked or earned pay, excluding pay in lieu of vacation, gratuities or benefits, within that 30 day period.

**Chair:** Thank you very much.

Hon. members, a copy will be distributed to each member.

Promoter, you did already give your reasons for this amendment before, but is there anything else you'd like to add while that's being done?

**Ms. Altass:** Yes. Thank you, Chair.

I will add that this amendment is based on the language that exists in the B.C. legislation. Again, acknowledging the concerns, and appreciative of the concerns brought forward by the minister. We know that this is a rate of pay calculation that, as it's used in B.C. already with their paid sick days, that it is a successful rate calculation. We know it functions as effectively and is certainly an appropriate and acceptable way to calculate rate of pay that we feel addresses the concerns that were brought forward.

Anything else, Nate?

**Nathan Hood:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Altass:** No? Okay.

**Chair:** The floor is open to discussion on this amendment. Is there anyone that was wishing to speak to it?

Okay.

Shall the amendment carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**An Hon. Member:** No.

**Chair:** I heard one “no” and the rest were all carried.

The amendment will carry.

**Ms. Altass:** Thank you.

**Chair:** So, moving on to the bill as amended.

I am now taking, again, names of people who want to be put on the list.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Promoter, I apologize. As you're aware, I wasn't here last week, so if I ask repetitive questions, please bear with me, but I hope you'll give me a little flexibility.

**Chair:** Just a little.

**Mr. Gallant:** A little.

I guess, just some concerns – what initiated this bill?

**Ms. Altass:** Many things. There's certainly a significant amount of research and evidence that shows the benefits of having paid sick days for workers. Benefits in terms of the health and well-being of workers; in terms of their access to preventative health measures.

For example, if someone wasn't feeling very well on a day, and they went in to seek medical support for that, because they had access to paid sick days, it can prevent a

much more serious issue. That's something that has been shown in the literature.

As well, of course, we know that COVID has really shown us that when someone goes to work sick, they are very likely to spread illness to others. It puts at risk all of the coworkers of that individual, as well as any customers or clients that that individual would engage with.

Particularly right now, as our isolation requirements are soon to be lifted – according to what Dr. Heather Morrison has reported; we're expecting that to happen very soon, which was an important protection, for workers to be able to stay home when they're sick.

With that lifting, we really need to make sure that moving forward, that workers, when they are sick, are able to take the time they need to get well so that they can take care of their own health, so that they can protect the health and wellness of their coworkers and those around them, as well as take the strain off of our health care system as much as we can to prevent people from having to go to our ERs and seek medical help because they weren't able to get well when they needed to.

**Mr. Gallant:** Okay. I guess I should have added in that question: The 10 days, where did you pick that figure from?

**Ms. Altass:** That's a very good question. The 10 days, that's a number that advocates, economists, health experts from across the country have been advocating for for a very long time.

As well, we have numbers that show that 10 is the average number of days that workers on PEI are already needing access to or showing that they take, keeping in mind, though, that women workers are generally – take more sick days, or need more sick days than men.

There really is a gender component to this as well. So, 10 is really the minimum if we are focused on what we need to do to ensure workers are able to take those sick days when they need them. Ten is the minimum number that is needed. I bring that forward as an evidence-based recommendation; 10 days.

**Mr. Gallant:** We've seen other provinces that have implemented this. Some have done five and some have done three. To your point, the 10 days, why would they do five and three if you're stressing 10 days and your source is stressing 10 days?

**Ms. Altass:** I can't speak to how those decisions were made or why in other provinces. I can say – and I actually tabled this last sitting – there's a letter from health experts, economists, a group of them that were advocating very strongly for 10 days in B.C., as well, as labour organizations were pushing for 10. Ten isn't what happened in B.C., but it doesn't mean that the evidence doesn't show that 10 is what's needed.

As well, when you look at the averages for other OECD countries – in fact, 20 days is the average across other countries. So, 10, while it would be the most provincially here, so far, and again, all the province – I think maybe not all the provinces, but many provinces are looking at this right now and are going to be moving forward soon, if they haven't already. Ten is really, when you look at that bigger picture, that global picture, it's really not as many as it seems.

As well, the federally regulated workers, very recently, have been provided with 10 sick days, legislated federally for those workers in Canada.

**Mr. Gallant:** To your comparison, well federal is a little bit different than private sector is, I'm sure you're aware. They have deeper pockets than the private sector has, so that as a comparison doesn't convince me on the 10 days. I just wanted to share that.

I do have a few concerns about the actual wording of the bill, and I know –

**Ms. Altass:** Can I respond to that comment first, before we move on? Is that fair?

**Chair:** Let him finish asking the question first, please.

**Ms. Altass:** Sure, okay.

**Mr. Gallant:** Do you want me to repeat that?

**Chair:** Hon. member, if you choose to repeat it, you can. Other than that, there are

devices that each of us have in our desk for those who may not be able to hear.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Mr. Gallant:** Eight. So, it says – I watched this the other day, and I didn't quite get it when I watched it, but I thought you had said that that's not really the way it is, the way it's worded here that you can carry things over.

The way it's worded, that I understand it, in Section (8) is, if you didn't use any of your days last year, January 1<sup>st</sup>, you lose one, but you have nine saved, so then you have 19 days next year?

**Ms. Altass:** No, no, so – sorry.

**Mr. Gallant:** Will you please – I understand from watching it the other day you went by summary. I think this bill deserves clause by clause, and more scrutiny than what was discussed the other day, because this is serious.

This is 10 days, on private sector.

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

**Mr. Gallant:** This is ten days.

**Ms. Altass:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Gallant:** You made a comment yesterday, and you tabled stuff that it doesn't create any unemployment. Well, if a business closes, and they employed 40 people, where are those people going to go to work? They have to go on unemployment.

Plus, if somebody gets hurt or is sick, where does EI come in here? Aren't there sick days through EI that you can draw on? Isn't there 15 sick days that you can start a claim, one week after you're hurt?

I just want to say that in that.

I have a few other questions, but those are some of my grave concerns in this.

**Chair:** Promoter.

**Ms. Altass:** Okay, thank you.

All right, going back to your original comment first just around, that the feds have deeper pockets than the private sector. I want to just unpack that for a moment. One important piece that I have put in this legislation and that I've stressed all along is that in this transition, I really believe that government needs to support small business. Absolutely.

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

**Ms. Altass:** But we cannot talk about business as one giant entity where all businesses need to be treated the same. In fact, it is our small, local businesses that need this support. There are big businesses, major corporations, that certainly can afford this and absolutely should be paying their workers paid sick days.

The starting place is to legislate for all workers, and then government can target those supports to our small, local businesses that need it.

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

**Ms. Altass:** We have had the Special Leave Fund in place, for example, during COVID, and it's set to expire in December. That fund is available to all businesses. I believe it can be a model that we can work from to create a program to support those small, local businesses, but again, it really needs to be targeted and support those businesses that really need it locally.

Now, that wasn't your main question, but I did want to comment on that.

**Leader of the Opposition:** That's a great (Indistinct)

**Ms. Altass:** So, (8) Annual carry forward.

I really appreciate this question, because I do want to clarify exactly what this language means.

So, the idea is not that – first of all, you don't accrue days beyond 10 paid sick days a year. You cannot. Based on this legislation, the minimum – the entitlement is 10 days.

Now, should an employer choose to do more days, I can't say they can't do that, I think

that would be lovely. But the requirement is 10 days. There's no requirement to go beyond that.

So, it doesn't build up year after year as you just described. So, if you have nine days left in December, you have nine days in January that then you then have to build up to 10 again. So, 10 is the maximum.

The great thing about that, I think, is that there's no incentive to use all your days by the end of the year, because if you use them all, you won't have any in January, you're going to have to start building up again, one month at a time. So, if you need them, you can use them. But, if you use them, you got to build up again. So, that's how that calculation works.

I hope that clarifies, but I'm happy to discuss further.

Actually, Nate, I should ask you if you have anything else you'd like to add to that, sorry.

**Nathan Hood:** Yeah, a few comments.

First on the point about the federal legislation, so that applies to private sector employers federally. I mean, that's still kind of the same idea here, this legislation also applies to the private sector. It's very possible that federal collective agreements – like federal government collective agreement – offer beyond that. It would, of course, depend on the particular collective agreement.

So, as far as the carry-over provision – I know there's the “decrease by one” language and I think some people get confused by that. That's tied to each day of paid sick leave that the employee does not take.

Maybe this example will be easy. If at the end of the year you have five days, then you can carry over those five days to the next year on January 1<sup>st</sup>, but that decreases by five the number of days you can earn in the next year. So, you basically start the year with five, and you can earn up to five, so you could have a maximum of 10 days.

The idea is not to – obviously that is a fair concern, we don't want people to not use the paid sick days and then have these really big

banks that could be cashed in basically at any time. But we want to make sure, too, that we don't force people to restart every year, because that defeats the purpose if they are ill and need to take time off for that illness.

**Mr. Gallant:** Are you confident that the wording of that, Section (8), covers what you just said, because by reading that, that's not what I'm getting out.

**Ms. Altass:** Yes. We are confident that –

**Nathan Hood:** Yeah, we are pretty confident. This is pulled from the federal legislation.

**Ms. Altass:** Yes, same thing.

**Mr. Gallant:** You made a comment, hon. member, that concerns me. You said there's lots of companies that can afford to do this. Well, when we were talking about a rent increase that you suggest at a 1%; there's lots of people that could have afforded a rent increase too.

It got tagged right across the province, and then the minister decided to put it zero percent.

I guess, what I'm trying to say, and it's leading up to my next comment – you handed out a sheet here of the people you consulted with. I quickly counted that there's 41 names here, of different organizations; 10 of them said yes, eight said no, the rest didn't comment yet, or are not.

So, you're basing your information and what you're trying to do on 10 yeses, when you have chambers that represent hundreds, if not thousands, of businesses, that are not in favour of this?

That concerns me. That's why I'm concerned about 10.

That's it for now, Chair, I'll save some questions for after. I'll respectfully let other people ask some questions.

**Chair:** Do you have a comment (Indistinct)

**Ms. Altass:** Yes, certainly.

As you noted, as the member noted, yes, those – in fact all of the organization's that said no were business – organizations that advocate on behalf of business, that is true.

The reality is, the goal of this bill is to ensure the health and well-being of workers, so to make sure that workers are able to take the time that they need to get well – this is a bill that is focused on health and well-being of workers, as well as ensuring that our small, local businesses have access to the supports they need.

I've explained why I feel that those supports for small businesses, specifically, are important. But, yes, and I will say this again on the record, there are businesses that can and should afford paid sick days for their workers.

Workers are the most valuable asset that any business has, especially right now when we know that there are labour shortages across the board. When a worker gives of their labour, it's one of the most important assets that they have, of their being. We should respect that and honour that and ensure that those workers are able to be as healthy and well as possible.

That's the goal of this bill. I absolutely believe that government needs to work with the chambers, with business organizations to ensure that the supports that are provided are appropriate and are what's needed to support those small, local businesses. Simply because the chambers said that they don't want to see paid sick days at all, doesn't mean we can't move forward. In fact, we absolutely have to, we just have to ensure that those small local businesses are supported in the process.

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

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

**Mr. Gallant:** I want to make it very clear, I'm not against the sick days, it's the 10, okay.

**Ms. Altass:** Okay.

**Mr. Gallant:** As I indicated, we have Workers Compensation, if somebody gets hurt at work. We have unemployment sick benefits that help people. There are some

sick days that are already involved. Some companies do provide some sick days.

To my point, what happens if somebody gets hurt and they're not at work?

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Gallant:** What if they get injured and they're not at work? Can they use their sick days? Let's say, hypothetically, somebody got cut off on a motorcycle and fell and got scraped and couldn't go to work for nine days.

**Ms. Altass:** Yes.

**Mr. Gallant:** Do they use nine of their sick days from their employer or does that go through EI sick benefits? It can't go through Workers Compensation because it didn't happen at work. What happens in a case like that?

**Ms. Altass:** Do you want this person to go to work who just got injured on a motorcycle?

**Mr. Gallant:** No. I'm not saying that.

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

**Ms. Altass:** Sorry.

**Mr. Gallant:** What I'm saying is, there's mechanisms in place now. If it happened at work, they fell, Workers Compensation covers it. If they get hurt in an accident, they can get EI sick benefits for 15 weeks, can they not?

**Ms. Altass:** Okay, you're losing me a bit on the argument here, but I think because there are supports available and benefits for some workers in some cases – and we're talking about can you access EI if you need to take more than 15 days of leave – that's well beyond what is in this legislation. That's a whole different ballgame, that's a whole different situation.

Do I think that a person who, if they were injured in a motorcycle accident and they can't go to work, can they use their paid sick days? Yes, they can because they're sick. They need to get well. If that is how they need to use their sick days, that worker can

use them to get well and then they can go back to work.

I mean, I don't really – I don't what else you would want them to do.

**Nathan Hood:** If I could add –

**Ms. Altass:** Yeah.

**Nathan Hood:** Another example, too, that's probably very timely would be COVID, because sometimes it's very difficult to determine where someone contracted COVID, especially when we have community transmission.

Just because an employee did not contract it at work because – I mean, it would be very difficult to demonstrate at this point – doesn't mean that they can't use their paid sick days to then not go to work and spread it to other people in the workplace. That's partly what all this is about is making sure that people don't go to work sick and make more people infected, which lowers the productivity of businesses.

We've seen it's contributed to shortages on PEI – well, like labour shortages and even business closures here on PEI and across the country. Even from a more general perspective, some of the research also shows that by allowing people to take time off work – for example, someone might take time off work for a cancer issue or a heart issue, is actually another one that we saw in the research.

The benefit of that actually means that because people are able to take care of their health by taking time off work, we actually improve the health of the person over the long term and we also reduce the cost to the health care system as well, because these issues don't get bigger and then even more complex to the point where these workers might be taken out of the workforce entirely to have to care for a health issue that could have been addressed early on.

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you for that answer.

My next question, and I promise I'll move on from there and let somebody else go.

You have to work 37.5 hours to have these 10 days. If you have somebody that works

two days a week for you, are they entitled to 10 days a year?

**Ms. Altass:** There is no distinction between part-time and full-time in the *Employment Standards Act*, so it applies equally to both full-time and part-time workers.

**Mr. Gallant:** That's it for now. Thank you very much.

Thank you.

**Chair:** Any further questions?

The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

**Mr. Henderson:** Yeah, thanks. I appreciate the member; I've talked to her a number of times and I certainly admire your passion for this particular subject.

I did have a few questions and I'll start off by, I did – when you first brought this to our attention, that this was something you were working on and I think your party had a survey or something that they had online or whatever. I had approached a lot of my businesses in the riding I represent, as well as some in your district, I might add, too.

I have to admit I did not get a real favourable response. I did have one employer in my district that would have about 10 employees and their comment was is that they would support it; 10 days. They probably did that in some cases, anyway.

But, just to give you some feedback, I just want to put it on the record. Most of the businesses I did talk to did say that they did provide sick day coverage to their workers, but it was mostly because that they legitimately knew that they were sick.

If I take a situation, there was a flu outbreak within their workplace, they tended to know that and they would tend to understand it. Their concern was, was that, if it's legislated and mandated that it has to be 10 days, then all of a sudden it becomes a tougher decision for the employer. I mean, they have to pay them if it's legislated, but they may not always feel that the person was taking the legitimate sick day, so it becomes a bit greyer.

You made the comment that this would lessen the impact on the health care system, but it says in your explanatory notes: that an employer may require the employee to provide a certificate signed by a medical practitioner certifying that the employee was unable to work or illness.

That means that they would have to go to the health care system to get that, and that's not easy to get today. I kind of got that response. I sort of wonder – then I have some individual questions, so I just wanted to make that little preamble there, Chair.

**Ms. Altass:** Can I respond to that, please?

**Mr. Henderson:** Sure. Yeah.

**Ms. Altass:** Okay. Thank you for those comments.

First of all, the medical certificate, I agree with you – that is, certainly, could be an issue for people to get those certificates with the strain on our health care system.

In this legislation, it is after five days. If a worker needs to take more than five days in a row, then they need to get a – they could be asked to, they don't need to, they could be asked to. So, as you just described, if there was an employer that wanted to require that of a worker they could; they don't have to.

However, this was really a concern that was brought forward from business. I would have no problem with that provision not being in there at all. Quite honestly, it was a concern brought forward by business to at least have that after five days, so it remains in this bill, but I do acknowledge your concern there, certainly.

As well, I want to talk about employers, your description of employers wanting to be or feeling that they should be able to decide whether or not a person is actually sick. I think, from the way I see it, what you just described is exactly why we need to legislate paid sick days – to make sure all workers are able to make those health decisions for themselves.

I mean, if an employer is able to arbitrarily decide who gets a sick day and who doesn't, there are way too many factors that can play

into those decisions. At the end of the day, a worker is best suited to know their own health and their own needs and when they need to take a day off.

So, I think, to me, you just described exactly why it needs to be legislated.

Nate, do you have anything else to add on these points?

**Nathan Hood:** No, but maybe just to go back. A point I made previously, sometimes, you know, it could be just a little like: I just feel a little off today and maybe I should go see the doctor. Then, maybe you don't check in on it and it becomes something much worse. That's also a big benefit of this, and I agree. That's what the literature also speaks to is that the workers really are in the best position to determine the state of their own health.

**Mr. Henderson:** I mean, it's a tough one, I guess. I sort of get that people know their own health in a better case, although, we don't always live in a perfect world and unfortunately, there would be some that would take advantage of that situation. They might have something else to do on a particular day and they say: well, I'll take that as a sick day. It makes it awful hard on the employer to judge that, whether that's legitimate or not. I just feel for the employer a little bit in that regard.

Another question I had in reviewing it, too, it was brought to me by employers. If an employer has a worker working from home and they're sick, I'm assuming they that they can still claim a sick day from working from home. It wouldn't be any different. No different than what the hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche mentioned. If you're injured at home, you can choose to take those days any way you want, right?

**Ms. Altass:** Yes, exactly.

I think we've seen instances – for example, I'll talk about this workplace that we're currently in. We have a hybrid sitting option where members can join from home if they are sick, but we have also seen situations where people are too sick to be able to do that and they need to take the time to get well. We've seen that very recently. I would not begrudge anyone that time to be able to

actually rest and recuperate and heal. So, yes, those workers will have access to paid sick days, as well.

**Mr. Henderson:** I guess another one is – obviously, I’m a pretty big advocate of the farming community. I hadn’t read anything specifically in this on the farming and fishing community, but they have a very short window to try to get a job done and things of that nature.

I know that farming and fishing does fall under the employment standards. Is this also applied to farming and fishing communities, or are there exemptions? There are, sometimes, many exemptions in the farming and fishing community that don’t follow all regulations and rules. I’m just clarifying if the farming and fishing community is somewhat exempt.

**Ms. Altass:** Very good question, yes. Farming, agriculture is exempt. Farm labourers, sorry, specifically. Yes. Fishing would not be exempt.

One thing to note in this is seasonal workers, they are able to build the sick days based on the model and the legislation for the time they’re employed, but at the end of the season, that’s the end of their building of sick days. They have to start again the next time they’re employed, next season. For fisheries, they would fall under that category.

**Mr. Henderson:** That raises a little bit of a red flag, because in the fishing community – I don’t know if you can get a holiday during fishing season, it’s part of your employment that you work. Now, obviously, if you’re extremely sick – I can see where a fisherman would provide an exemption there.

I know we have some members in this House that fish. I would wonder why they wouldn’t be also included, if the farm industry is why fishing industry wouldn’t also be excluded from this. Maybe you could give me your rationale behind that.

**Ms. Altass:** I’ll say one thing and then I’ll let Nate answer on this as well.

You’re in a fishing boat; do you really want one of your coworkers to come on with COVID if they are sick? That would be a

terrible location, I would think, to be in close quarters with someone who has an illness that could be transmitted. Just one thing to consider there.

Nate, did you want to go on (Indistinct)

**Nathan Hood:** I would just say, simply, we didn’t make any changes to the more global exemptions that are in the act. We just drafted this, and whoever it would apply to normally under the legislation, it continues to apply to.

**Mr. Henderson:** Fair enough and decent enough answer, I guess. I’ll leave it to – there are members that fish that are part of a lobster fleet in this House, so I’ll let them decide whether that’s appropriate or not.

I guess, ultimately, for me – I have one more issue I guess I should bring up.

It says under Section 3 of the explanatory:

The minister of economic growth and tourism may implement a financial support program. They did under COVID.

That would be an issue that would change the dynamic a bit for me. If it had said, “shall implement,” then there is a program there that would provide some sense of support. I’m going to assume that’s a big burden on government, so hence, we’re going to go with, “may.”

Ultimately, that’s what my ultimate issue is. I just feel that 10 days is too many, and that’s my one reason why I’ll have a hard time supporting this as it stays at that.

Maybe you can answer the may/shall issue.

**Ms. Altass:** Yes, I’m happy to answer that.

I can’t put “shall.” This is the strongest language, as an opposition member, a non-government member, private member’s bill that I can put in is what I have here.

If I could make it stronger, I would. I absolutely believe that government needs to support small business in this transition. This is the strongest language I could get; that’s why.

**Mr. Henderson:** Thanks very much, Chair.

**Ms. Altass:** Sorry, Nate. Did you want to add something else there?

**Nathan Hood:** Yeah, the specific issue is that private members can't bring forward what we would call "money bills" or bills to create an appropriation.

Basically, what this provision does is it authorizes the minister to do that, and also specifies that the money can only be spent if an appropriation comes. This fund can be created if government chooses to put the money towards it.

I know you didn't ask about this, but you might be interested. We do have some numbers on the Special Leave Fund and the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit. The Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit was the federal fund to support sick leave.

That funded \$5,435,000 over the course of September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022. About three and a half million of that came just in 2022. Of course, we had a lot more COVID cases at that point.

The provincial government's Special Leave Fund – we had some data up until July. It's not shared publicly on a regular basis, but through a written question, we found out there was \$447,000 that was paid out from April 2021 to July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

That kind of gives you a sense of how much governments are already investing into this and (Indistinct)

**Mr. Henderson:** Thanks, Chair.

**Ms. Altass:** Can I add one more thing, actually, before we move on? Just a comment.

You mentioned small businesses, and some in my district. I've certainly had some fantastic conversations with small businesses. Many of those owners, at the start of the conversation, were very cautious about the idea of paid sick days. A lot of that concern for those small businesses comes from not believing that government would support them if this was needed.

So, again I will stress, yes, absolutely, those small local businesses do need those supports, but in those conversations, I also

learned that those businesses are already managing workers who are facing increased incidents of illness.

With COVID into the mix here, we're really talking about a cold, flu and COVID season. That's not going away anytime soon. I wish it was, but it's not.

They're already trying to manage this. If we legislate it, we make sure all workers have access to it, then you can target the supports to those small businesses that need it, and the workers have what they need, too.

**Mr. Henderson:** Like I said, if that said "shall," it certainly changes my dynamic quite a bit on the whole thing too. I would agree, if I said that government was going to be providing the supports for those 10 paid sick days, I think that I would have a whole different answer back than if it was their responsibility to pay for it.

Ultimately, I'm still going to go back to saying 10 days; it's a number that I can't get my head around to support at this point in time. If there wasn't the "shall" versus the "may" – that just gives you a bit of an idea where I'm at.

Thanks, Chair.

**Ms. Altass:** All right. Did you have a number?

**Mr. Henderson:** Yes (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Okay. Also, just to follow up on the exemption for farm labourers and not for the fishing industry.

You gave an example: If the fisherman had a helper that was on the boat with him and had COVID; I know fisherman, they have a window of opportunity to make their living. It can be eight to nine weeks. They will work, and they work hard.

Was there any conversation had with the association that represents most of the Island fishers, the PEIFA?

**Ms. Altass:** I don't think, actually, they were on our list. I'll be honest. That was certainly not an intentional oversight.

Those fishers, as I said, because it's a seasonal industry, they will be accumulating those paid sick days one month at a time. So, they'll never get to anywhere near the 10 days. Our act is as clear and simple as we could possibly make it. We went with what the existing *Employment Standards Act* has in terms of excluded workplaces or workers – labourers.

Nate, did you want to build on that?

**Nathan Hood:** Yeah, we didn't change any of the exemptions for the act. We just drafted it – because there are already paid sick leave provisions under the legislation. There's one day after five years. That's kind of – to your point, there'd be very few fishers who would qualify for that.

Buy yeah, we didn't make any changes to which particular industries are subject to the *Employment Standards Act*.

**Ms. Altass:** I will just add quickly, too, these are the businesses, organizations, not for profits that we had reached out to directly. We also did a public call through all of our social media, our website; that any individual or organization could certainly provide us feedback, and we would take that into account.

I just want to say that it was nothing intentional to not include the fisher's association, but we certainly would have welcomed their feedback. It was all open.

**Chair:** I just find – because the fishing industry is one of our major industries on Prince Edward Island. It is our main – and agriculture, with tourism pretty close behind, as our main economic drivers. They do represent a lot of people.

Let's get into a scenario. If I had a spring gear – a captain, I had a spring gear – you're saying the accumulation would not be there because you're only there for a short period of time. But if I had an employee hired for the spring and I also had him hired for (Indistinct) the fall season, there's a break in between. Does that accumulation stop after the first because of that break, or does it continue for the whole year?

**Nathan Hood:** I'd have to get back to you on that. It would depend, I guess, on the

employment relationship and whether it ceases, whether it continues.

**Ms. Altass:** Yeah, if they were actually laid off in between, or how that – we'd have to look at that.

**Nathan Hood:** We can bring that back for you.

**Ms. Altass:** Yeah, happy to look into that and bring that back.

**Chair:** So, that would also carry over to (Indistinct) anything else. If there is a break in employment, does that accumulation stop then and begin again at zero, or does that carry over if there was a month break during a fiscal year, or any time of year?

**Ms. Altass:** We'll have to confirm on this specific example. Generally speaking, if there's a break in employment – when we're talking about tourism, for example, those seasonal workers, that they would start again at zero the next season.

What you're describing – I want to be honest; I don't know the answer to that, and we will find out and we'll get back to you, for certain.

**Nathan Hood:** It really does depend what is causing the break in employment. We can happily bring that back.

**Ms. Altass:** Appreciate that question.

**Chair:** Okay. I have the Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

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

Thank you, and I appreciate the passion you bring with this and the work you've done to date on this. I really do. I really do believe in paid sick days but my department still has a few concerns about the way the bill is drafted. You addressed some of it with the amendment, but still some questions.

As you're well aware, and we keep talking about how we're in the middle of – smack dab in the middle of – the comprehensive review of the *Employment Standards Act* right now. I am confident that this process will look at paid sick leave and be examined

thoroughly by this independent committee and look at it from both sides.

I really want to make sure that this process is fair and inclusive, collaborative, and not political. So, right now I'm going to seek Treasury Board as soon as possible to extend the Special Leave Fund until I get the report back from the Employment Standards Committee, the review. That will buy us until March. It's supposed to be ready in March and then we can re-evaluate it then and take their comprehensive review and see what we can do from there.

That's kind of where I'm standing now and I'd like to see this come to a vote.

**Ms. Altass:** I can respond to this?

**Chair:** Sure.

**Ms. Altass:** Thank you for that, minister.

A few things in response to that. Unless something has changed, the *Employment Standards Act* review, according to your website, won't be done until at least July. It says that there's still 10 months after the interim report was released, which was released in September, so we're looking at – I don't know where March is coming from.

Once that report is released, there's not – first of all, we don't know what the report will say but we also, it's not snap your fingers and all of a sudden, legislation is passed and effective. After that, there's going to need to be legislation drafted. That's going to take time. Even if it's passed the next sitting, there's going to be time to then implement it.

We are talking about likely two years, reasonably, before there's any possibility of paid sick days, just a possibility. Workers can't wait. I mean, look at how much can happen in two years' time. Workers cannot wait two years to have paid access to paid sick days.

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

**Ms. Altass:** With the isolation requirement lifting soon, and Dr. Morrison has told us that is coming, workers – that is the last protection that workers have to be able to take the time off when they get COVID, and

that's the recommendation still from CPHO. You need to take time off when you get COVID or when you're sick at all. They want you to stay home so that it doesn't spread

Without that protection, while I'm glad the Special Leave Fund has been in place, it is not a guarantee that workers have access. Unfortunately, many workers have contacted us, have let us know that for whatever reason, their employers have not applied for that fund and they've not been able to access the sick days when they need it.

We can have situations where an employer could decide whether or not they feel it's worthy. It is not a guarantee that all workers can take the time when they need it; it falls short.

**Nathan Hood:** If I could add, as well, under the act, if we take statutory leave – so, if there's leave created for something and you take the leave, the employer cannot terminate your employment or suspend you. That is one of the concerns about the isolation order ending because, as you might be aware, we have emergency leave under the act, which allows workers to take unpaid leave, which government is then pairing with their Special Leave Fund to give those workers some form of paid sick leave.

But without that underlying emergency leave, they're not protected legally from things like termination, as far as I read the legislation. There is still that issue of come December 1<sup>st</sup>, sure, they can access the fund but they still don't have the legal protection if they don't show up to work.

**Chair:** Any more questions?

**Mr. Thompson:** Yeah. I'll send a letter to the committee requesting that it be done as soon as possible. I think we can have partial – we won't have the full modernization of the bill, of course. I fully expect they'll look at this and we can have a proper bill here by – as soon as possible, and maybe even next fall.

**Chair:** Okay. Are there any further questions?

**Ms. Altass:** I have more. I think time, first of all. I don't know.

**Chair:** Okay. I'll call the time.

**Ms. Altass:** Oh sorry. Okay.

**Chair:** Anyhow, we have reached the point, we will ask you to adjourn debate.

**Ms. Altass:** Okay. Sorry. Didn't mean to take your job. Sorry.

Mr. Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair, and the Chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

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

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (No. 4)*, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move the report of the committee be adopted.

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

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

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

At this time, the third party calls Bill No. 127 for debate.

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

**Clerk:** Order No. 38, *Election Signage Act*, Bill No. 127, in Committee.

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

You're just going into the Committee of the Whole.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from O'Leary-Inverness, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Thank goodness.

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

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Winsloe to chair the Committee of the Whole House, please.

**Chair (Z. Bell):** The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled Bill No. 127, *Election Signage Act*.

Promoter, you do have – there is a stranger?

There has been a request for a stranger to come onto the floor.

Shall it be granted? Granted.

Good afternoon, stranger. Would you like to say your name and title for Hansard, please?

**Colton Profitt:** Good afternoon. Colton Profitt, Director of Legislative Affairs for the third party office.

**Chair:** Thank you and welcome, Colton.

We are presently in debate right now. We had just stopped – I still have my list from last time. I'm just going to quickly refresh. If there are any members that do not want to be on the list, you can let me know.

I have the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, the hon. Leader of the Opposition and the hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities, followed by the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

I'm going to start with the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Do you have any questions on this bill?

**Mr. Trivers:** I'm good for now, thank you.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

**Ms. Lund:** Thank you, Chair and thank you, promoter, for bringing this bill. It's certainly an interesting one.

I will say there are some things about it, in particular, that I do think have a lot of potential. I was interested in seeking feedback from the PEI Coalition for Women

in Government on what kind of impacts we might see in having less election signage.

One of the things that I heard back, particularly when we're talking about those big signs, is that it can really level the playing field. Whenever you have an established person who's been involved in politics for a long time, who has a lot of money in reserve behind them, they can plaster the district with big signs and it can be harder for a new face to make themselves known.

The idea of those big signs having a limit, I think, certainly has potential to have some positive impacts. I thought that was interesting feedback from the coalition as well.

They also talked about how, particularly in municipal elections, you could see a lot of benefit there for really levelling the playing field.

Of course, we talked about the environmental impacts of this legislation. While it's been noted that, of course, elections come around once a year – not even once a year, excuse me; once every four years. It's a small impact, but it is still an impact.

Some of the things that I think are bigger impacts are the potential safety issues that you're aiming to address. You've put forward a list of locations where signs should not be, which I think is really helpful.

I think talking about reducing the visual clutter of having signs everywhere, particularly through roundabouts, things like that; I think that's really impactful. I think, again, with large signs, the potential to level the playing field is a big impact. I feel like some of those are very exciting.

One of the concerns that I have, and I did mention this to you, is the idea of telling people that they can't put a sign on their own property or on properties where they rent. That's been a challenge for me.

The rest of it I find really easy to support, but with having only 50 smaller lawn signs, I personally would have a hard time, when people reach out and request a sign, to have to say, "Well, there's actually already a

couple of signs in this poll, so I won't be putting them on your property."

So, I do have a proposed amendment for this, but before I introduce it, I would love to know your thoughts about signs on people's properties; on either rental properties, or properties that they own specifically, versus that visual clutter or those big billboard signs.

**Mr. Perry:** I'll start and then if you have anything to add, you can jump in, or wait until the end.

So, you talked about a level playing field and I believe that limiting the number of signs puts everyone at a level playing field. There may be someone that might run as an independent, let's say, and they may not have that financial backing behind them, but they might be able to afford 50 lawn signs, let's say.

I really think that balance will be there, regardless of whether you're in as an incumbent or a new candidate; whether you're representing a party or just as an independent, it levels out that playing field.

We discussed, the last time this bill was on the floor, the same question you had about limiting private property owners from displaying their preference. That was brought up in consultation process last year. Part of that was the motion I put forward on the floor, listening to members speak and what their concerns might be; also, in consultation with your party.

I believe that we have to do something. Just leaving it wide open does nothing to decrease the amount of signs that are out there, whether it be in private or public. We had to pick a number. We gave choices that people could use it on a rotational basis.

I don't believe, through my experience or any of my discussions, that there are more than 50 people in each district that go to a headquarters to ask for a sign. Do I believe that candidates or campaign team members ask individuals or private property owners if they can put a sign in their yard? Absolutely.

Many of those property owners are very uncomfortable with this. They don't want to say no, so they do say yes, but they have a

sign in their yard that they really do not support that particular person or party.

By limiting the number to 50, it gives the opportunity to those individuals who really want it, which I believe is less than 50, to have an opportunity to display their preference and also an opportunity for each candidate to have some recognition within the district that they're running.

**Colton Profitt:** I would just add, in regard to the placement on private property, is this bill pushes the status quo. It pushes what we see as normal right now. In part of that is, I think, the responsibility of a candidate to recognize that the purpose of this bill and the primary spirit behind it is to limit the environmental impact that elections can cause, especially as it relates to signage, and explore new ways of how they can get people involved in another way.

Whether that's sharing something on social media, or whether that's making the classic – I remember the days of the PEI phone tree; stuff like that. There are so many other ways that we can engage with elections at this point in 2022.

I would just say that it's a valid point in terms of when it comes to placing signage on private property, but I would just say again, it comes down to looking at the overall picture of what we're trying to do with this bill and finding new ways, and promoting the new ways, that we can have the public engage with during an election period.

**Chair:** Hon. member, you said you have an amendment?

**Ms. Lund:** I do, yes. I'd just like to speak to my point on it, but if you would like me to introduce the amendment first, I can certainly –

**Chair:** If that would be all right, yeah.

**Ms. Lund:** Yeah, absolutely. My amendment would say:

MOVED THAT

Bill 127 is amended by the addition of the following after section 4:

#### 4.1 Signs, residential property

(1) Notwithstanding the limit set out in clause 4(a), a candidate may, with the permission of a resident, place additional standard signs provided for in subsection 2(1) on a residential property owned or occupied by that resident, within the electoral district for which they are a candidate.

#### Residential property defined

(2) For the purpose of this section "residential property" means residential property as defined in the Real Property Assessment Act, R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. R-4.

**Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. You do have copies?

**Ms. Lund:** I do, yes.

**Chair:** We'll just give a few moments for the – I'm going to let the Pages pass out the amendment.

You said you had general comments, or a response to –

**Ms. Lund:** I do, yes. I would love to speak to this, Chair, if that's all right.

**Chair:** Yeah, all right. You have the floor.

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

While I would absolutely say that I appreciate the spirit and intent in which you would like to limit the amount of signs out in public, particularly when I think of the last couple of by-elections, we saw signs that didn't even have the candidates name on them. There were signs everywhere, well beyond 50 signs that wouldn't have even referenced the person who was running.

So, I do see value in having a limit out in public, but I think of so many individuals who have told me – and not just in my own district – that they've kept lawn signs from previous elections. They're excited to support someone. Islanders love to engage in politics. We have the highest voter turnout in the country. People really enjoy that.

Those folks who have kept lawn signs and diligently can't wait to put them out in future years, I would be very reticent to tell them that they're not allowed to do so.

So, while I totally appreciate the spirit and intent of not having more than 50 signs out on main streets, I absolutely would like to see us allow people to do so on their own merits.

**Chair:** Thank you very much, hon. member.

I'm not sure if the promoter or the stranger would like to comment first, and then I can open the floor to questions.

**Mr. Perry:** I do have some questions on it. I'm not sure, and I don't have a copy of it here, sorry –

**Chair:** Oh.

**Ms. Lund:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you.

**Chair:** Take your time, and you have the floor when you're ready.

**Mr. Perry:** Okay, so, in this, it says, in the place, additional standard sizes provided.

Does that mean – I guess my question is, is it unlimited or is it one per property?

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

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

Currently, there would be no restrictions from a person wishing to request more than one sign, but it would have to be the standard two by two; I think you put out four square feet in your legislation. So, it would have to stay within that size limit.

I don't know if there are a lot of examples of a homeowner or a tenant wishing to have five or six signs, but if they wished to, and the campaign wished to pay for it, I suppose that would still be provided for.

**Mr. Perry:** I've seen corner lots, let's say, that are prime areas for advertising where they've had multiple signs, again, on private property. So, that's why I was asking about

this. Does it limit to that – I mean, there's no limitation with this amendment that you're proposing on signs being placed on private property, with no limitation of how many signs can be placed on each property. Is that correct?

**Ms. Lund:** Those critical lots where people are trying to put up signs, we're often talking about large oversized signs. Very rarely do you have one property competing, because it's a corner property, for lots and lots of little signs, but yes, this would allow for that.

**Mr. Perry:** Okay, I just want to say that I – again, during the consultation process, I really believe I've done everything I possibly could to engage all MLAs. I put it forward this spring, a motion on the floor, because I wanted to get feedback, and that was an opportunity for any MLA to stand up and to say whatever they want with no time restrictions either.

So, I took that feedback because initially, when I was thinking of promoting this bill, it was going to be for no signs at all. I just thought, you know, we could be leaders here. This is an opportunity for Prince Edward Island to take the lead on this. When it comes to an election, sometimes we're such traditionalists, and I mentioned before, there is a lot of pressure by a lot of members within each campaign team to get that signage out. They believe that it's the signs, the signs, the signs are going to get the person elected. I don't believe that. I think it's the hard work of the individual that's going to get them elected, and their reputation.

Our jurisdiction here on Prince Edward Island is so small that every candidate would be known, regardless if they're an incumbent or a new candidate, within their district, and if not, they would become known rather quickly.

There are other means of advertising; through social media. It is 2022. We'll use Facebook, for example; a great way to get your message out and get your face out to many people.

The integrity of this bill was to restrict placement and limit the amount of signs, basically. I know other members of your

caucus do not agree with the environmental impact that it may have, or that it does have, and there was a jurisdictional scan, a question asked of other jurisdictions in Canada what that impact may be. There were some studies that Colton had presented here last time on the floor about the amount of plastics that go, after an election, into a landfill.

So, we're trying to reduce that. We're trying to – that's one of – the environment is one of the components, and safety is the other component, along with cost. There's a lot of cost that's involved in this, too, to put signs out there.

The intent of this bill was, again, to limit and restrict the amount of signs; we're all on the same level playing field, and for those other two concerns that I mentioned, or components that I mentioned.

I think this amendment, if it goes through, would totally change the integrity of the bill that I put forward, so I will not be supporting it.

**Chair:** Okay, and so, you don't have a question to the proposer of the amendment?

**Mr. Perry:** No.

**Chair:** Do you have a comment, hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot?

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

I will say that the member did put forward an opportunity to engage on this, which I participated in, and I did provide a number of pieces of feedback, most of which I would say were incorporated into the bill. I think that the member and I engaged in this in good faith. I also did let the member know that I felt that restricting what people did on private property was something I was far more reluctant to do.

But I do think that a lot of the elements of this bill are positive. I think there's a lot of good that comes from it. I would agree with you that there's an environmental component, it's just that an election only happens once every four years. So, in the context of the bigger picture, I think while this is certainly valuable, it's got bigger impacts in other areas, in my personal view.

Leveling the playing field, I think there's a lot of safety components; like I said, I certainly see value in this.

But I will open the floor to others and see if the amendment is supported or not.

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

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Chair and thank you for the opportunity to speak to the amendment.

I'd echo the comments from my colleague from Summerside-Wilmot. I am concerned about anything that limits the capacity for private individuals to express themselves, particularly in an election.

I also appreciate the intent of the bill overall in terms of limiting signage, because absolutely, in an urban area, the clutter can be, not just worse, but actually detrimental to lines of sight. There's a lot of complaints. It's a really big issue, as it is in all districts.

I'd like to do a couple of clarifications though in some statements made that I'm a little concerned about because they didn't include the comments that I had raised previously in debate.

When I was first elected, it was in a by-election, so there were no other districts involved. I'll be really clear: You do not put a sign on private property unless you have the permission of the owner of that property. I don't know how other parties in the province do it, but certainly, within our own structure, we have a very clear process for sign requests, which require a signature from a property owner agreeing to a sign being put onto that property.

So, I really need to be clear that signs do not go onto private property unless the permission has been given by that owner to do so, which means that we know where all those signs are, which means they can also all be collected in the appropriate time afterwards.

I think that's really important, that we're not implying that the signs are somehow ending up on private property without permission of the private owner.

The other thing is, during my by-election for example, I had 270 lawn signs on private properties. We had to reorder them three times. My lawn signs, which are the ones that are commonly used by our party, are a bag sign that goes on a wire frame.

**Mr. Henderson:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Bell:** They're a bag sign that goes on a wire frame, they're made of recycled plastic, and they can be reused. They're all currently living in my shed. So, they have not gone to a landfill. They are absolutely recycled, as they should be, in that they can be reused. I don't know if I'm ever going to get to get 270 out back on lawns; that would be great. I would be happy to put 50 out. But I'd also be happy to put out 70 or 75 or however many get requested.

The coroplast signs, which are the larger ones, which, I agree, are much more of a pain, are actually now the roof of my shed and my greenhouse and a couple of other things in my garden. So, I think creative recycling is something that we can talk about. If we want to reach creative solutions for things, we need to recognize that ripping all those signs up and taking them to the dump is not necessarily the only thing.

I know somebody else who uses the coroplast for packing material for art that's being shipped around the country because it makes really incredible, lightweight, rigid containers when you cut it.

If we have a real issue with the environmental impact on this, I'd say that probably us on this side of the House can give you some good guidance on what you can do to address that environmental concern, but also creative uses with something that is happening every four years, so we have time to come up with some other creative ways and look at what else has been done.

But if you're going to bring forward legislation, then, like we've heard with all the other debates, we want to talk about the input that's coming from the community and from the members of the House that have the experience.

We did talk about this before, and we did raise these points before, so I'm appreciating

this amendment, because it's reflecting, not just the experience that I have as an elected official, but also it's reflecting what I'm hearing from constituents, is that they want the right to have and express support for whoever their candidate may be on their own private property, whether that's with one sign or two signs or whatever.

That's their right to do that, that's part of the democratic process, is to be involved in the process, is to be able to say that you feel proud enough or comfortable enough or confident enough in your choice to put a sign on your lawn and say so.

Certainly, for candidates who are not the norm, whether that be women, or people of colour, or people who are not natural born Islanders, those signs really make a difference. That can be the difference, for some people, on whether or not that tips in their favour.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Bell:** So, saying that, I'm fully in support of the amendment as tabled. I'm also fully in support of the intent of the bill. I think limiting signage and getting a control over how that can get out of hand is a really great idea, but I do think that we need to think carefully about whenever we put something in legislation that restricts the rights of individuals to participate and express themselves, particularly in our democratic process, particularly in the state of the world as it is today.

I am in support of the amendment, and the overall bill, should it be amended.

**Chair:** Thank you, hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Are there any other questions?

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** I support the bill as well. I don't share the view of the promoter that signs are outdated, maybe it's because I'm so old, but I think it's a very critical part of the election to put up signs.

As it happens, I had in my last campaign, I think exactly 50 signs on private properties,

and I can't really see why I would – if some additional people come forward – and by the way, it's a lot of work – I mean, you have to be really careful, as my fellow member mentioned, it's a lot of work to get somebody to put a sign on their lawn. They don't come easy, and if I get 10 more requests, I would like to be able to give them their signs.

I'm supporting of this amendment.

**Chair:** Thank you for your comments, Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Are there any other questions to the amendment?

Shall the amendment carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Some Hon. Members:** No.

**Chair:** I think we're going to have to try that again.

Shall the amendment carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Some Hon. Members:** No.

**Chair:** Okay, we're going to do hands. Show of hands, all those in favour of the –

**Mr. MacEwen:** We still have questions, why are we at a vote?

**Chair:** Oh, hold on, we have a question?

**An Hon. Member:** No.

**Chair:** I'm sorry, hon. Member from Morell-Donagh.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Just a quick clarification.

So, the definition in the *Real Property Assessment Act*, can I put one of these signs at a place of business?

**Chair:** I'm sorry, hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

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

My understanding of the way that this is – it's very much just residential property. So, you could put a sign at your campaign office, but a business would not take a lawn sign, unless it was one of your 50 that were already out in the community.

**Mr. Perry:** Not that it makes a difference but –

**Mr. MacEwen:** So, when I read the amendment, I thought it was 50 on public land, and then do what you want on private land. This is saying that, do what you want on residential property, but 50 to businesses or public land. Am I reading that correct?

**An Hon. Member:** I think so.

**Ms. Lund:** The reason that I took the definition from residential property was very much around the intent that we wanted renters to still be able to put up signs if they wanted to, even if they didn't own the property. But I do think that the promoters' original intent around this to reduce visual clutter, to have less signs everywhere – if you also allowed that on every business, I think you could certainly be pushing the limits on that.

So, with the amendment as presented, it would allow for personal signs on the property in which you reside, but not on businesses.

**Chair:** Hon. Member from Morell-Donagh, do you have any other questions?

**Mr. MacEwen:** So, if someone put a sign on their business property, we don't actually have a way to enforce that anyway, right? You're allowed – you could go and put a sign on there regardless, so –

**Ms. Compton:** What if they live there?

**Mr. MacEwen:** Well, if you live there, it would be under the residential anyway.

**Ms. Lund:** That's right.

**Ms. Compton:** But it's your property, not the business's –

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Morell-Donagh still has the floor.

**Mr. MacEwen:** It wouldn't matter if you still had –

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

**Ms. Lund:** We loved it.

**An Hon. Member:** Pass the amendment.

**Mr. MacEwen:** So, we could still have as many signs as you want in private business, really; there's nothing to limit that.

**Ms. Lund:** I would respectfully disagree. Now, I'll leave that to the promoter to speak to, but as I understand it, from how I've read the legislation, you would be allowed to have 50 signs out, largely in the community. The only exception that is carved out specifically for that, falls under the definitions under the residential property act.

There are no exemptions carved out anywhere else, that I see, unless someone else has an amendment that's a surprise.

**Mr. MacEwen:** No, I think you have the only surprise.

**Ms. Lund:** I provided it in advance, it was not a surprise.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Morell-Donagh, if you're all done for questions –

Are there any other questions to the amendment? We're going to go back – oh, sorry.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Just along the line of questioning from Morell-Donagh, if there's a multi-unit dwelling, those are residences and residential property – I haven't read the *Real Property Assessment Act* to see if they would qualify.

Does that mean, you could put them, say, on the outside wall of each one of the units in a multi-unit property? I'm just curious if there would be any limitations there.

**Ms. Lund:** Since this is not your first election minister – member, excuse me – you would know that there's already no limit on that sort of thing, so there would be no – if you nail signs to a building, probably

the landlord is not going to be super enthusiastic about that, but if the landlord wished to allow you to nail signs to the building, and the candidate running in that area wished to provide multitudes of signs for that purpose, in theory, this does not capture that any more than it's captured currently. But also, that's not a standing practice that we see in this province. I would find it surprising if that was an outcome.

**Mr. Trivers:** I'm just thinking in the context of this bill, which is limiting the signs to 50, your amendment's opening up to residential properties, in which case, now multi-unit dwellings might come into play more often, because the limit of 50 signs would be in place except for residential properties. I'm trying to just clarify in my mind whether we might see multi-unit dwellings now with that being put up.

Chair, I actually have a constituent who loves, every election, to have as many signs as possible on his property, including giant five-by-eight signs of my face on his house, nailed right up there.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Somebody (Indistinct) –

**An Hon. Member:** Imagine.

**Mr. Trivers:** Al Croken, brother Al; shout-out to brother Al there in Emerald.

So, it's not out of the realm of possibility.

Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** Thank you, hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

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

I appreciate that clarification and I would say that your constituent could still nail your face to the wall, but it would have to be –

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

**Ms. Lund:** – it would have to be done so in two-by-two format.

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

**Chair:** Thank you, hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

**Mr. Fox:** It's a good debate, for sure.

What's next, as far as it comes, say we'll say radio advertisements?

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** The question is outside of the scope of this amendment, specifically.

This amendment, if I'm saying it correctly, is specific to signs that would be put in a residence or a person's residence, as opposed to broadcast over the airwaves.

The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

**Mr. Fox:** I respect that, Chair, but I'm saying that if we stop this or limit this, would that mean we flood, or could we flood another medium or another –

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

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

All I would say to that is the scope of my amendment is to do the opposite. I'm not trying to limit people's ability to participate in an election on their own property. I suppose your question is probably better suited to the promoter.

**Mr. Perry:** We were speaking on the amendment.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities, do you have any other questions?

**Mr. Fox:** Well, the only thing that's going through my mind now, I'm thinking about social media, right?

**Ms. Lund:** I still think the amendment is (Indistinct)

**Mr. Fox:** I think you open up the whole thing, Chair.

**Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, I don't know if you have a comment or not.

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

I suppose my only question is if the Minister of Fisheries and Communities thinks that my amendment is opening up all of these other potential problems or if you feel the bill (Indistinct).

**Chair:** The bill in general.

**Mr. Fox:** I think the whole bill is.

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

**Ms. Lund:** Got it.

**Chair:** At that point, are there any other questions to the amendment specifically?

I don't see any, so there has been a little bit of debate since the question was called but shall, we'll try it one more time, shall the amendment carry?

**Mr. Perry:** No.

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Chair:** Okay. I'm hearing division so I'm going to ask for a show of hands.

If you are in support of the amendment, please raise your hand – if you are in support.

**An Hon. Member:** Oh, lots of hands.

**Chair:** All those opposed to the amendment, raise your hand.

The amendment has carried, 7 to 12, or 12 to 7, excuse me. The amendment has carried.

Now we are going to go back to the bill as amended.

Presently, on my list, the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot was the last person.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Okay, perfect. On my list from that, with the amendment, I next have the hon. Leader of the Opposition followed by the hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

I'll start with the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

If you don't want to be on, or if you'd like to go back on with the amended bill, just let me know.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Chair, all of my questions have been answered so you can take me off the list (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Your questions have been answered.

I'm going to go to the hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Are there any questions to the bill as amended?

**Mr. Perry:** Actually, I have something to say.

**Chair:** Promoter.

**Mr. Perry:** Again, I have said this many times. I came in here to do something that would modernize the way that election signage is used in our province. It was an opportunity for us to make change to be leaders right across Canada, right across – everywhere, to be quite honest.

The spirit was to address the growing concerns around the environmental impact that this may have on our Island and also to deal with public safety.

Historically, signage has often been used in ways that I found endangered the public with placement of signs, so that component was placed in the bill to address public safety by limiting – or restricting placement of signs in public property of where they can be placed.

The number of signs I, again, said earlier I thought, no signs. It's 2022, we have other means of getting our message out there, to get our face out there. Social media is a great opportunity to do that. Radio is a great opportunity to do that and it has been used in the past. That does not affect the environment nor does it affect public safety,

so that is one way that we can get our message out on Prince Edward Island.

I just thought I would do – bring this forward. Often, as Islanders, we're afraid of change and we're such traditionalists but when change happens, we accept it. We move on saying, oh well, it wasn't that bad. This time, with this amendment, it changes the integrity of the bill that I put forward. It really, really does.

I am surprised that a party that is based on environmental concern would have two members state that it doesn't have an environmental impact – election signage does not have an environmental impact, this is not an environmental bill, and that they're advocating for more signs. Totally, totally surprised – nothing would surprise me, I guess, with this party, but it does blow my mind.

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

**Mr. Perry:** Basically, they talked about – did I hear somebody say small minds?

**Chair:** Promoter, you have the floor.

**Mr. Perry:** Anyhow, questions that one of the members had, what we're trying to do is talking about putting in signs on private property and, oh, I had 275 or whatever, and I'm going to build a pyramid now because I went and saw how they were built – things like that.

Those members, all right, are trying to say that they're doing things, not asking property owners to put signs in their yards – sorry, that they ask them to put the signs and get them to sign off them. I will, and it will be my mission, to come back and prove that wrong. If that's said in this floor of this House, I will prove that wrong.

I went to houses where there were signs from this party and I said I'm not going to pass; I'm going to go in. Knocked on the door and I said, "I know you may have already made your decisions, but you know what? I'm not going to pass; I'm going to say hi". They said, "We did not make that decision". They came here and they asked us and they pressured us into doing it. I felt uncomfortable and I said sure."

This is a part that really, really bothers me. This is the part that had driven my desire to put this forward, was that, and especially in the last election. There were properties that I have seen in my district that had, from this particular party, probably 12 signs in it. They were close. And then, where property owners said no, they went just outside of their property and put the sign there. So, it made it look like that person in that home supported that particular candidate.

Anyway, I'm trying to address all of this. I'm trying to put us all on a level playing field. And you know what? I came in here with good faith to promote this bill. I believe the integrity of the bill that I put forward has been severely compromised. I will not allow this bill to be destroyed, and the purpose behind it.

Therefore, I'm going to ask that debate be adjourned and that the Chair report progress on the bill and beg leave to sit again.

**Chair:** Thank you, promoter.

Debate has been adjourned by the promoter.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Perry:** Mr. Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair, and the Chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

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

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) with a small mind.

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

**Mr. Perry:** (Indistinct) small mind.

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

**Speaker:** Order! Order!

**Chair:** Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having under consideration a bill to be intituled *Election Signage Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

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

### Motions Other Than Government

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

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

At this time, I would call Motion No. 118.

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

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, Motion 118 is currently under debate. Debate was adjourned by the seconder, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

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

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

I'm glad to be chatting about this topic again, and it's about our health care workers. We've chatted a lot about it and where are we in our system and what have we done to make it a great place to work, and that we need retention. We need to retain and we need to treat everybody well.

When we saw \$8 million go to some health care providers and workers, it was good news for those people that deserved it, but we have to remember, and I think we're just talking about remembering and valuing the system as a whole and valuing the people that work.

This helps some, but it doesn't help a lot of – we talk about this a lot, where we're talking about proactive health care, where we're talking about the things that get people healthy. There has to be both. There has to be a system there in case you've fallen under hard times and you need the health care system.

Then, on the other side, the proactive approach to getting out, that is going to become the challenge of our future. I talk about health promotion and wellness a lot. Those people that deliver that are completely left out. Completely left out.

So, I want the minister to think about the respiratory therapists. We had a good conversation and debate today about that and how important they are, and the physical therapists and all the other –

**Mr. Henderson:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. McNeilly:** Oh, there's some physical therapy going on back there.

The occupational therapists – do you know how important an occupational therapist is? When somebody comes in and they've hurt themselves and they have to get back home, it could be refitting – how they can just function, or how they can just – maybe they've had a stroke and one side of the body is paralyzed. An occupational therapist can come in and make that better and make that person whole for that time.

We can't forget about them. I know the minister has – and the lab techs that look at – we don't see the work they do, but the work they do is crucially important. We don't necessarily get tours of the lab and what's happening in there, but those results, and the thousands of things that –

**Mr. MacEwen:** Crucial. Crucial.

**Mr. McNeilly:** – it's crucial. As I was getting ready for this motion again – I'm shaking about it a little bit – I went back and looked through the Speech from the Throne to see where we were in February 25, 2021, to see what was in here.

Change will not happen overnight. The process is designed to be evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Why, overnight, did we give \$8 million to some, and not to others? That's revolution – that's something that will send ripples through an entire system. Like I said yesterday about bringing a team together and keeping it strong, we've separated it and broken the team.

That does not match. What's happened here does not match what's in the Speech from the Throne. There's so much in here – and it says in here, too, on page 7 of the Speech from the Throne, “Health human resources are critical in the delivery of quality health care services in our province.”

That's the leading paragraph, and it goes on about the history of care. Well, that is true, and we would all agree with that. If that's true, we needed to be working towards that statement and looking at it as a whole.

If it was recruitment – recruitment and retention – in here, in the Speech from the Throne, we were, at the time – when you go back – we knew that there were recruitment challenges. I think that on this side of the House, we were talking to you about the value of retention, and I think that not enough was done over that time, and then we had to play catchup, because our nurses were in a situation that – our system is about to crash unless we do something.

For various things, minister, you have dealt with COVID, you have dealt with nurses taking different positions outside of Health PEI. We've got to bring them home, we got to make sure that they feel valued. Both the nurses, both the respiratory therapists, the physiotherapists there – it works as a collective piece. So, there needs to be – you need to look at that sentence and realize that everybody and everything works together. I think we've missed that little bit of time.

A lot's been talked about with this, and there's some – do we apologize? Do we say we're sorry? And I would stand up and support that. At this time, as a minister, you have to look at this as a whole and figure out how; where we can find those pieces to say, hey, we value what you're doing. That becomes the most important thing.

As MLAs, we do a lot of certificates and we do a lot of different things. You see the value in them receiving something like that. We've got to figure out a way that we do that with our health care system.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I'll adjourn debate, seconded by the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

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

#### Orders of the Day (Government)

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

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

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the first order of the day be now read.

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

**Clerk:** Order No. 1 Consideration of the Capital Estimates, in Committee.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the grant of capital supply to His Majesty.

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

The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, Chair the Committee of the Whole House, please.

**Chair:** The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to further consider the grant of capital supply to His Majesty.

A request has been made for a stranger to be brought onto the floor.

Shall it be granted? Shall it be granted?  
Granted.

Can you please state your name and position for Hansard?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Gordon MacFadyen, Executive Director of Fiscal Management.

**Chair:** Thank you and welcome back, Gordon.

Hon. members, we are on page 23: Capital Expenditure – Social Development and Housing.

The section Capital Improvements has been read and is currently under debate.

Questions?

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Capital Expenditure – Social Development and Housing: 64,797,100

Shall it carry? Carried.

We are on page 25: Capital Expenditure – Transportation and Infrastructure.

Land

“Appropriations provided for land purchases and shoreline protection.” Land Purchases: 365,000. Shoreline Protection: 2,000,000.

Total Land: 2,365,000

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

**Ms. Bernard:** Chair, I was getting my notes up to ask questions on the housing section.

**Chair:** I did ask, and I did look up and around, and I made it very clear, are there any other questions, nobody responded, nobody indicated.

My job is not to sit here and wait for somebody without indication that you want to ask a question. I asked if it was carried. It was carried. There was nobody that said no.

**Ms. Bernard:** I do have questions.

**Chair:** So, how many questions do you have?

**Ms. Bernard:** I have a bunch of questions.

**Chair:** A bunch of questions, okay.

Let me consider this. I did ask, I did look around, and I specifically looked at you, too. So, in all fairness – we have been on this particular section for – this is three days now. Yes, three days now.

Okay, so I will go back, but I’m going to limit questions, because it was carried, everyone was given that opportunity to say, yes, I have more questions, nothing was said.

Hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, I’ll give you five questions.

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

Okay. So, I’m wondering – now I need to condense them.

I’m wondering, with the challenges in finding labourers at the moment, how confident do you feel that we will stay on track to what’s been planned in terms of units and such?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I think it's the intention of the department to stick to the plan as much as possible. There were challenges, as I'd indicated in one of the tenders that went out in Summerside, that some discussion has taken place with the industry to try to better understand timing and things like that.

I think the department has used a number of mechanisms, not just the traditional design-build, to speed up the process for acquiring government units and has had some success. So, I think at any point in time, a budget and a plan were just that. We'll be back sometime in the future with an update to that plan and how the results were either achieved or not.

**Chair:** Hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, your second question.

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

How many of the new units will be built to the net zero standards?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I received a clarification and I think they're net zero-ready right now, not necessarily specifically net zero.

**Chair:** That question has been asked.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** All new builds for government are planned for net zero-ready.

**Ms. Bernard:** I'm wondering if the construction costs include the cost to acquire the land, or if that's somewhere else.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Generally, within a construction project, if there is land required to be procured, it is within the actual construction project. Any time we would have a designation for land or the procurement of raw land, it would show up in the land section.

**Ms. Bernard:** I don't know if this the correct place to ask this question. I'm not sure if it's capital or not that this would fall under.

One of the concerns that we've heard from several of our publicly owned seniors' units is – one of the concerns they had were that there were a lot of keys floating around the

Island, and there were a lot of people entering the buildings who had no right to be in the buildings. They didn't live there or know anyone who lived in there, necessarily.

One of the solutions that was put forward by government was a new fob system, but the problem with that is I'm not quite clear if those keys were ever taken back, or if – I know during Fiona, with the power outages, those fobs didn't work and so they had to go back to the keys.

I'm wondering, is this the budget where we would find that?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Generally not. The definition for capital would be an improvement to a building or a matter, of course, where significant improvements were made to extend the useful life of a particular building. Replacing keys and fob systems would probably fall below the threshold for capitalization and therefore would more of an operational, maintenance-style issue.

**Chair:** Gord, before we move on, I understand you may have some documents to be tabled for the next section.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I do.

**Chair:** Can you table them now so we can get them distributed –

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I have tabled them with the clerk.

**Chair:** They are tabled? Okay. So, they will be copied and distributed.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Thank you.

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

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

There was a bit of back and forth the other day on this capital priorities list, which I was told today does exist, and it's going to be tabled tomorrow.

Do you have a list in front of you that says which buildings are going to have their roofs repaired, and a timeline for that?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** No, I do not. The way the capital process works – and I’ve mentioned this, with each department that has a capital repairs budget – they’re responsible for maintaining sort of an ever-greening style list of projects. The ones that need it the most get to the top of the list, and the ones that would be more nice-to-haves go to the bottom of the list. They work their way through the list with the budget available.

At this point in the year, we’re working with departments to see how much that amount should be for any given year, and it was determined this year that all those budgets needed to be increased, which would say that we’ll get farther down the list and attack and get at more projects. I don’t have the list.

**Chair:** Hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, that was five, but I’m going to give you one more because one of them was a repetitive question that was asked previously.

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

**Chair:** On the next section?

**Ms. Bernard:** Okay.

**An Hon. Member:** Not this section?

**Chair:** No, the next section.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Excuse me, hon. member. You do not have the floor, number one, to start with. You indicated to me – I asked you what you wanted. You want to speak, on this here Budget, you’ll speak to the capital expenditures on transportation and infrastructure, which I did read that section of.

I am going back, as a request, to be fair to the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park. She is the critic for this particular – am I correct on that? – department. So, I’m allowing her five to six more questions on this.

I asked if this section previous should be carried. It was unanimous that it was carried, so I’m moving forward.

Hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, you have the floor.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** Chair, I –

**Chair:** Hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, you have the floor.

**Ms. Bernard:** I’m looking at the \$3 million jump in construction next year. I’m wondering if you can tell us what projects that encompasses.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I guess, if you could just be a little more specific, so I can get to the right spot.

**Ms. Bernard:** Construction, residential services.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Yeah. So, we’ve made sort of a determination this year, to try to separate out the lines for the housing corp. versus the lines for the department. Those particular lines for the department would be repairs and upgrades to group homes. That would be the facilities that are operated by the department, not the housing corp. There are additional funds planned for group homes for the next year.

**Chair:** Okay, hon. members, we are now moving on to discussion, which has already been read. The section on land, capital expenditure, transportation and infrastructure. The floor is now open.

Hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, did you have a question on this section?

**Mr. Hammarlund:** I do, Chair.

I’d just first (Indistinct) say that I have always appreciated your speed of reading and moving on, but I had a question in the last –

**Chair:** Hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, do you have a question on this section?

**Mr. Hammarlund:** I have many questions.

**Chair:** You ask your question. You have the floor.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** Okay. That’s why I’m speaking.

So, in general, and this actually relates to lands as well, the Province does have another sleeping giant that they have not used for land or buildings to make housing, which is the CADC, which has hundreds of millions of assets, offices and staff, that could build housing (Indistinct) but yet, there, I said it.

Also, on land purchases, are there any particular projects you're currently focused on buying land for?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** For this particular section, it is government's budget for procurement of land, as it becomes available, to put towards the 7% target.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** I think you had a target of reaching 10% by 2020 –

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I think they were going to try to get to 10%. I think the established goals, I think it remains at seven.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** Has the government set a new timeline for the 7% target?

I think we need more than 30,000 additional acres, or so.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Definitely, they're on trying to buy upwards of 1,000 acres a year which would be around 1% of the commitment, increasing it by 1% each time you can get 1,000 acres.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** With 1,000 acres a year, when will you meet the 10% target that's set out in the '21 throne speech?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** That'll be dependent at the speed of which we can make deals with landowners. The latest information I had, we were approaching 5% at the current time. If you were going with another 1% a year, I guess in two years, if we were successful in acquiring another 2,000 acres, we would make the 7% target.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** Chair, I need a few minutes just to read the handouts.

**Chair:** Sure. Is there any other –

The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness and then the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Mr. Henderson:** I guess I'm looking for it in the Capital Budget. It's always something I've asked here numerous times, the issue around bush cutters. I believe it is a Capital Budget item. I think Gordon's had a few of these ones before. I am still in a district that has a beat up, clunky old bush cutter that's broke down more than it's operating. The trees are getting quite a bit higher – they are literally trees now in the ditches in my riding.

Are there more new bush cutters coming to Prince Edward Island under this Capital Budget?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** There's definitely more Capital Budget to address bush cutters, but to say specifically whether or not that's within the plan, I'd have to get that information back for you.

**Chair:** I'm just going to ask, we're on the section for land –

**Mr. Henderson:** Oh, okay.

**Chair:** – so, do you have any sections on land?

**Mr. Henderson:** No, this is more on the equipment, I guess.

**Chair:** If you want, that's the next section and I'll put you on the list.

**Mr. Henderson:** Okay, sure. Put me on the list for that.

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

**Mr. Gallant:** Can you define the land? I know some of your operations are on rental properties, some you own. This is just land, so buildings that sit on it – that seems like a small amount of money.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** This would be the budget just to procure raw land, land that becomes available. You get it parcel by parcel when people are interested in selling. I know they're out looking around some of the sensitive areas to try to work with landowners to see who's interested in selling. But they would use this Budget to actually procure raw land for use – not for use, just to put in towards the 7% target.

**Mr. Gallant:** So, it doesn't pertain to land that a school sits on –

**Gordon MacFadyen:** No.

**Mr. Gallant:** – or land that – it's just raw land that the government – sort of like what we call here, Crown land. Like the government gives back some land (Indistinct) –

**Gordon MacFadyen:** For sure. Absolutely. As I explained, if there was a project that needed land to put a building or a structure on, the purchase of that land would go with that project.

**Mr. Gallant:** Okay. Is there any consideration in this land to purchase woodland that got destroyed with these two hurricanes?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I just, through some of my day-to-day work, see some of the land deals that come through to government. A lot of them are wooded areas and marshy areas and sort of areas that are not necessarily developable, but would be suitable for holding as Crown land, for sure.

**Mr. Gallant:** So, government is entertaining those properties?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** They're trying to meet their targets for acquiring land.

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** You're welcome.

The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

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

The target is to get to 7%. Can you tell me with this \$1.8 million over five years how close we will reach to get to that target?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I think I just answered that question. If we were successful in acquiring 1,000 acres a year, 1,000 acres would equate to about 1% of the target for us and thereby, within the next two years, we could get towards the 7%. We're currently approaching 5%.

**Ms. Beaton:** Okay. And, so, \$1.8 million will acquire the 1,000 acres per year?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Prices vary. We're always looking to negotiate a good deal for government and a reasonable deal for the landowner. Like I said, they vary, but that's the Budget that has been established for a number of years and one that they're using to meet the needs at the current time.

**Ms. Beaton:** The funding, is the funding in this to acquire the land and designate it as protected?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Yes.

**Ms. Beaton:** That's what it's for?

Thank you.

Has government set – you said, if we are on track to do 1,000 acres a year, we're at approximately 5%, do you think in two years we'll achieve that 7%?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I think. Well I did the math on how many acres are on PEI, and if you get 1,000 acres a year, it equates to about 1%.

**Ms. Beaton:** That's interesting because in order to get 7%, wouldn't we need in the vicinity of 30,000 acres or so?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** No.

**Ms. Beaton:** No? Then what's the number we need in order to reach 7%?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I did the math here. I think there's like 140,000 acres or something like that. Anyway, I'll have to get the math. I've done it once. Trying to go off memory here and I'm trying to find a spot where I've written it down but (Indistinct) –

**Ms. Beaton:** [Laughter]

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Gordon MacFadyen:** (Indistinct) farm, ok.

**Ms. Beaton:** I'm not good on that, math on my toes.

Okay, when do we anticipate – because in the throne speech, the '20-'21 throne speech

stated 10% of protected land, can you tell me when do we think that we'll achieve that? Is that in the five years we would get to 10%?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I don't that answer. It would depend on how quickly we can work with the current landowners to secure that land.

**Ms. Beaton:** Okay. Thanks.

Shoreline protection is under this. What is the overall objective of the Shoreline Protection Program and how we assess whether the spending, this \$10 million over five years, is achieving the objective of the program?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Well, I think if the past storm has any indication, some of the work that will be done under this will hold up better underneath future storm conditions. I think we were looking at areas like the causeway in Souris that would fall under this particular spending. Probably some of the area out in, one of the parks up west, Cedar Dunes, there was some work done there that would fall under this. It would be areas where we have access to the shore with some of our infrastructure.

**Ms. Beaton:** Okay. I know that the handout gave us some detail in here but it's not very – other sections, we've listed out what the projects are, so there's spending of nearly \$2 million unbudgeted for shoreline protection in the current fiscal year.

Can you give me a little bit of detail on where that \$2 million is going to be spent in this current year?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** This would –

I think, well, they're projects like Souris and up west. I'm not sure what the plans are. This was a relatively new component within this Budget so it's really the first time that we've introduced it. I suspect that they will be developing the criteria to start the work, kind of, next summer.

**Ms. Beaton:** Okay. Is there any contribution, federal contribution with this program, or is this 100% provincial dollars?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** At this point, it's provincial dollars. There's no federal offset for this particular project.

**Ms. Beaton:** Looking through this, it's funded protection – that it's for roads and public properties. Is that correct?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** It would be for areas that have access to the shore.

**Ms. Beaton:** Okay. Is it the intent – I'm just thinking of the list of projects and I'm wondering if it's possible to list them, or is this kind of a scenario where you would allocate the money first and then request people to put in projects after? Or, do you have an actual list of the projects that this \$2 million will cover?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I don't have a list of the projects at this point. As I've indicated, it's a brand new allocation for the department.

**Ms. Beaton:** Okay.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** They've had, on a case-by-case basis, come in the past. I mentioned two of them; one would be the breakwater in Souris that had significant exposure.

So, they believe there's enough of them, and with the results of the recent storm, to kind of highlight this as an area and get it away from the roads and bridge section and really focus on the shoreline protection in the areas where government owns property.

**Ms. Beaton:** The \$1.8 million, assuming that that's the impacts of Fiona, when do you think you'll have an updated funding requirement? Will we be seeing that 1.8 million in a special warrant soon, or how will that be brought to the House?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Any of the special warrants related to the current fiscal year will be brought to the House when the appropriate spending is going to happen. Again, this would be a forecast number that's put forward, so we'd be working with the departments to definitely get to Treasury Board, then to Executive Council when the House is not in session to issue special warrants. We'd be bringing it forward in that manner.

**Chair:** Hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford, do you have many more questions on this particular line?

**Ms. Beaton:** Not on this particular line. He stemmed a couple questions for me just from that comment, if I could dig.

**Chair:** Okay, if you want to hold that, I'll move to someone else and then come back to you.

**Ms. Beaton:** Okay.

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

**Mr. Hammarlund:** Oh, I just had one comment. I think we're speaking about two different numbers when you say that 1,000 acres is 1% of the area of PEI. You're speaking maybe about 1% of the natural areas you want to buy or something like that, not all of PEI.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Well, I had indicated I'd have to go get my math shored up here a little bit.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** Okay, that's all.

**Chair:** That's it?

**Mr. Hammarlund:** Yeah.

**Chair:** I guess we're back to you, hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

**Ms. Beaton:** Okay. We were just talking about the \$1.8 million that's listed in here as estimated.

Has any of that \$1.8 million been spent?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I'm not sure. I'll have to go back and check the notes for that particular project and where they're at with it.

**Ms. Beaton:** Correct me if I'm wrong about special warrants, but typically, a special warrant should only be issued if it can't be approved through the Legislative Assembly first. So, a special warrant would kind of be if we were outside of the time of the House, and then asking for that money after the fact because maybe we're not convened.

But we are, and so, would it not make more sense to bring that \$1.8 million of spending, if we know where that needs to be spent, to the House now instead of spending the money first and then bringing it as a special warrant after the fact? Because that's contradictory to the *Financial Administration Act*, I believe. You could correct me if I'm wrong, but I think if we know we're going to spend money, the Legislative Assembly should be made aware of that before the money is spent, not afterwards.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Yeah, to be clear, the department receives an overall capital budget as well. So, the overall spending – they get the first crack, and I've mentioned this several times, to kind of go faster, go slower on some of their other spending. Even though there may have been a project identified, whether it be through Fiona or – I don't know specifically what the work is, so I'm just surmising and I will find out what is the work, but they may not need the spending right at this moment in time. When the project gets approved, they would indicate whether they can fund it from within their current capital allocation.

It would appear, from this document that's been presented, that they have – I think they're planning to be over, so they would have capital special warrant issued at some point in time, I think prior to the House sitting, when all this spending was first identified.

**Ms. Beaton:** I guess my only challenge with that, Gordon, is that we, as a Legislative Assembly, approved a budget estimate of \$72 million, and now the budget forecast is 92 million, so, \$20 million more than what was estimated in the Legislative Assembly last year.

Is any of that additional \$20 million that has not been approved through the Legislative Assembly able to come to the floor of the House in this sitting so we can address it now? Has any of that 20 million been spent already?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I believe there has been a capital special warrant for the department that will be coming in the supplementary appropriation when that bill

is tabled, probably very soon. It's in progress.

I know there was some damage from Fiona that occurred almost just before the House was about to open, so I think there may be some forecasting here. I think it's on bridge repair, for sure, that they're planning on doing work and they're planning on bringing some information to Treasury Board, and if they happen to get it firmed up while the House is sitting, you're absolutely right, that's where appropriations come. The House passes money. When the House is not sitting and 30 days after the House is not sitting, Executive Council is responsible for that approval of special warrants.

**Ms. Beaton:** Thank you for that, Gordon, because fully recognizing that obviously there was damage done by Fiona and that we have to address that, so I appreciate the clarification on it and that we will see appropriations come forward because obviously, I think we all know in this House that there was additional money that was required to be spent for obvious reasons. So, I look forward to that appropriations bill coming.

My last question, I think; the shoreline protection, that's \$2 million. What type of protection does the department favour? I'm kind of looking for: Is shore armouring part of this? What actual projects will be accepted under that \$2 million?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Again, I'll state I'm not an engineer.

The solution for any particular location is not always the same, depending on the tidal flow and the tidal forces. I think they have done some armouring in Souris along the bridge structure and the causeway structure that's there. They did some armouring in Cedar Dunes. But there were also some other techniques used to embed some things out in the water to absorb tidal flow as well, so it's not all armouring. I think they use the architectural experts in this field to design projects that would essentially protect the shorefront.

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

**Ms. Beaton:** That's all the questions I had for this section, Chair.

**Chair:** Okay, any other questions?

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** Just one more question. Does the 2 million in your Budget here, does that account for the damage due to Fiona, or will there be another – will you need more?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** As I'd indicated, I think they have some – when we get down into the bridge section, I think there's a forecast in there for the current year on some bridges that were affected. This particular budget line is prospective going forward, so I assume they will be doing an assessment and putting those projects on the priority list that need the repair.

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

**Mr. Hammarlund:** I'm good, Chair, for this section.

**Chair:** Any other questions on this section?

Shall it carry? Carried.

Equipment

“Appropriations provided for acquisition of equipment.” Light Fleet: 1,500,000. Heavy Equipment: 3,500,000. Electric Vehicle Charging Stations: 150,000.

Total Equipment: 5,150,000

The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

**Ms. Beaton:** On the light fleet, government has committed to transitioning to all electric school buses.

Will you make the similar commitment to the light fleet? I know there's been lots of talks over the years as to what will happen there, but can you explain to me what the department's plan is there?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** The department's plan is to try to get as many electric and hybrid options into the fleet as they can that meet the operational needs for the

department. They're just starting to come online with some truck options that are electric. They're in high demand, so trying to get access to that fleet is challenging.

But I think, the information I have, we're approaching 10% of the light fleet as being electric or plug-in or hybrid options, so I think they're having some success, but probably not as fast as we would like. That has to do with the supply chain and the availability

**Ms. Beaton:** I'm going to hang on what you just said: 10% is what the goal is? Moving to 10%?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** No, I said we currently have 10%.

**Ms. Beaton:** You currently have 10%. Okay, thank you.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Well, close to 10%.

**Ms. Beaton:** In this Budget, in the 7.5 million, what percentage of electric vehicles or electrifying the light fleet will that get us to?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I don't know if we've set the number. I think, as I'd indicated, that as each purchase comes up for replacement in the fleet, there's an evaluation done as to whether or not there's an electric or hybrid option for that particular vehicle. So, it will take some time. A large part of the light fleet is indeed trucks. I don't have the exact number, but it is a good portion of it.

As I had indicated, that technology is just coming online now and they're in high demand, so it will be challenging to turn it over quickly until more production starts to take place.

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

**Ms. Beaton:** I'm good for right now, Chair.

**Chair:** Hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness, did you have a question on this section?

**Mr. Henderson:** Well, on the heavy equipment section of this section, so, yes.

So, anyway, maybe somebody has texted you in the meantime just regarding the whole issue around bush cutters. I believe there was a few bush cutters that were purchased by the Province last year; took a long time for them to get here. But I still haven't found one in my district at all.

The reality was, in 2021, I had zero bush cutting; nothing. Imagine how fast things are growing. Like I say, I've got 30-foot trees on the edge of the shoulders in some of my district, and it's getting a little bit much. It runs the cost up for snow removal. Water issues tend to not flow as good when there's not reasonable bush cutting.

I'm just wondering if there's any details on how many bush cutters will be purchased in Prince Edward Island and whether there will be any specific ones coming to the riding of O'Leary-Inverness.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I don't have a specific answer for O'Leary-Inverness. I know that in in the next year, a sizeable increase was added to the Budget to reflect the need to pick up some additional pieces of equipment.

Even though the note would indicate 2.4 over five years, it's frontloaded a little bit too. Next year has got 3.5 million, so that's a sizeable increase in the next year.

**Mr. Henderson:** I don't think that's a lot of money. I've purchased – I've got some heavy equipment of my own and it doesn't – they're expensive pieces of equipment. I do not know what a bush cutter cost would be, but if I look at 2.4 million over five years to purchase emergency preparedness of heavy equipment, doesn't seem like a lot, and I, once again, don't understand. Maybe on the handout you gave, purchase of new heavy equipment machinery and trucks required to maintain the provincial highway system, so it may be part of that too.

It just, 11.5 million over five years, we'll say, intents and purposes, 2 million a year. Even though it might be a bit – I would think, if you're getting into maintainers for the scrape roads, snowplow kind of stuff, you're into big money.

I guess, ultimately, at the end of the day before I pass this, I would like to maybe

bring back a little bit of a breakdown if a bush cutter, or how many bush cutters are coming. I would like to know, also, how much a bush cutter costs, in the scheme of things.

I get it that maybe O'Leary-Inverness will be the last one to get one, was kind of like the forestry firefighter equipment, but I'm persistent and I'll ask every year, and I tend to keep knowing that. I've got a guy up there with a bush cutter, Glendon MacIsaac, does a great job, does fabulous work, but he's finding when the trees get bigger and bigger, it takes longer to cut them, and it's more wear and tear on an already wore-out machine.

I get that at the end of the day, there has to be more capacity to cut more bushes and try to get ahead on it, because like I say, in the end, you're going to pay because you're going to pay for it in hiring contractors with backhoes to get the water flowing in the spring. That happens every year. There's too many bushes and trees.

I'm just trying to help you, minister, and saying you need to advocate to your minister of transportation that we need to have a reasonable fleet and a reasonable turnover of your fleets and the bush cutters across the Island.

I think there's five in Prince County. It's not a lot. They're having a hard time keeping up.

I guess that's all I wanted to say, Chair. I hope that the member will bring that information back before we do a final approval, if I can ask that; I'd be happy.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I'll make the request to the department.

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

**Mr. Hammarlund:** I still have a question about the light fleet. I happened to be out at Ford when they rolled out the first and last pickup truck, and a pickup truck, I believe, probably the same model as the minister of energy is driving. If I wanted one, I would have to wait for two years.

How have you adapted your purchase methods to accommodate that really long lead time?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Purchasing vehicles in general has been challenging over the last two years. The department is concerned because every year, we end up spending more on repairs and maintenance for an aging fleet, so they're definitely trying to get what equipment they can through the door and looking at all options and models, but with a particular mindset to where we can electrify, and there's an option available; that's where they're going.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** What I mean is have you been changing your ordering method, so now you can order electric cars years in advance. Or does that mean you no longer can buy electric pickup trucks?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Yeah, I'm not aware of the specific procurement techniques that they're using. I know they're working with the local dealerships to understand the inventory that is available. It's not like the older times where you put a tender out and you get three responses with vehicles priced at all different levels. They're almost getting their names on the list to get units as they're coming in.

But I can definitely find out if they've adapted their plans.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** Really, what I'm after is if you have a commitment to get as many electric trucks – do you have a commitment to have 100% electric fleet in the near future? Is that reflecting in your purchase methods, similar to the commitment we have on electric school buses?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I'm not aware that that commitment has been made other than trying to look at all procurement for government with a pathway to net zero lens on it. So, I think where possible – the needs still need to happen, the services still need to be provided, and they're looking at trying to get all vehicles that they can get their hands on to meet those needs on a timely basis.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** I was wondering about the heavy equipment, if you're looking into the option of using, say, hydrogen-powered vehicles, which would be suitable for heavy

stuff. In Denmark, for instance, right now, they have windmill-to-hydrogen stations where you can go and fill up to run that kind of equipment. Are you looking into that?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I'm not aware of any hydrogen plans currently on PEI.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** One last question on the charging stations. Are they mainly for equipment that basically is part of your government garages, or are they for charging employees' own cars?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Generally, the units being procured in this section would be at government locations. The use at those locations soon will be open for all, but these would be installed at government buildings.

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

**Mr. Hammarlund:** Okay, good. I'm good for now.

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

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

Regarding heavy equipment in this section, you've got the budget going up nearly 2 million, and our handout tells us it's for emergency preparedness of its heavy equipment. Could you explain what that means?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** This would be more for the snow removal. These would be tandem trucks that would have gear. I experienced this in Summerside where they had the plows out on the road after pushing trees off the road as well the day after. It was the first time I'd seen the snowplow in operation this early –

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

**Gordon MacFadyen:** – but it was very effective, I'll tell you, in getting the roads cleared.

I think there's a particular focus on those tandem trucks that have extra capacity to do snow clearing and other emergency – with a box on the back to haul stuff away as well. So, it was a mindset to put some additional

funds in the front end of the Budget to try to get that fleet updated a little bit and enhanced.

**Ms. Bell:** I love that, the kind of multipurpose vehicles that can do – and it is reflecting the reality of something that can be used different times in the year.

With regard to the electrical vehicle charging stations, are we at the point where we need to start thinking about using (Indistinct) partial subsidy and letting the private sector participate so we can get more chargers out?

I heard you say that these ones are going to be at government locations, but we know that the charging infrastructure is really key to uptake. Is that something that is in that longer five-year plan, potentially?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Yes, there was – I'm not sure if you were in the House. Another department also has electric charging stations that they're going to put at leased locations. We're actually going to buy the gear, it's our gear, and put it in private sector locations as well.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you for filling in that gap. I guess the other question that relates to that, and you may have answered this already, so, apologies if you have, but is there expenditure that's going to be reflected in the operational budget for maintenance on those chargers? I don't know, honestly, what the maintenance is like on these, but I'm imagining there's going to need to be some kind of upkeep.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Yeah, the issue about some of the sun chargers had come up and whether or not they were – I had put that question out to the department. I haven't received an answer back, but –

**Ms. Bell:** It's coming.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** It's coming, I hope.

**Ms. Bell:** Okay. Then, just going back to the – you talked about challenges with light fleet. The intent is there, but the pipeline, maybe, isn't.

Obviously, we're still going to have to purchase gasoline and diesel vehicles in the

meantime. Do we have an option on more flexible purchasing? Are those potentially things that could be traded in as other things become available? Is there some kind of flexibility where we have those kind of purchase agreements?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** We tend to use the vehicles that we get to the end of their useful life, and sometimes beyond. Definitely, I guess, if there was a marketplace for trucks on a trade-in – I'm sure the department looks at all options when they're looking at keeping the fleet as new as they can. If that option was available, I'm sure they would do that.

**Ms. Bell:** You have approximately, your handout tells us, 368 light fleet vehicles including health, in total. What's the proportion that are zero-emitting now? Do we have that?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I think we have approximately 33: fourteen electric, two plug-in hybrids, and 17 gas hybrids.

**Ms. Bell:** So, we're under 10%.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Just approaching 10%, I'll call it.

**Ms. Bell:** Yeah, getting there. Let's be optimistic; glass half full. Okay.

Obviously, normally we'd be asking about your timeline to transition, but you were speaking earlier that you can't put a pin in that right now as we – the double whammy of it being the models available that you need and just the supply chain issue.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** It's been a challenge, for sure.

**Ms. Bell:** Yeah.

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

**Ms. Bell:** I think I'm good there, Chair. Thank you.

**Chair:** Any other questions on this section?

Shall it carry? Carried.

**Ms. Bell:** (Indistinct)

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere, what was that comment?

**Ms. Bell:** I said, "I guess not," Chair.

**Chair:** I asked if there were any questions –

**Ms. Bell:** And I said, "I guess not," Chair.

**Chair:** I didn't ask you to say that, all right?

**Ms. Bell:** Well, I'm allowed to speak, Chair.

**Chair:** No, you don't have – I didn't acknowledge you to speak, all right? I'm just tired of your little comments over there.

**Ms. Bell:** Chair –

**Chair:** Moving on.

Capital Improvements –

**Ms. Bell:** Chair?

**Chair:** Moving on.

Capital Improvements – Highways

**Ms. Bell:** Chair?

**Chair:** "Appropriations provided for highway and bridge construction –

Will you please stop interrupting?

**Ms. Bell:** (Indistinct) I'm asking you to put me on the list, Chair.

**Chair:** Will you please stop interrupting?

Capital Improvements – Highway –

**Ms. Bell:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Hon. member, I don't know what your problem is, but there's respect in this House.

**Ms. Bell:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** I would ask you to please, if you're not acknowledged to speak, to please wait until you are acknowledged.

Capital Improvements – Highways

**Ms. Bell:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Capital Improvements – Highways

“Appropriations provided for highway and bridge construction.” Bridges: 12,000,000, National and Collector Highways: 22,300,000. Provincial Paving: 15,000,000. Active Transportation: 1,500,000.

Total Capital Improvements – Highways:  
50,800,000

Questions?

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** As the Minister of Finance, what role do you play in setting the priorities of your government?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** With regard to this section?

**Mr. Hammarlund:** If any.

**Mr. McLane:** Again, we have directors of finance in every department and they report in to finance. Again, we have those people in place in each department that, again, put together the budget and then bring it forward.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** Highways is the largest single section in this Budget. Can you explain why? Is this the most important priority of government?

**Mr. McLane:** (Indistinct) replacement costing. I mean, again, the input costs have gone up anywhere from 30 to 40%, and then we have a double hit with actually the transportation and the installation costs with regard to fuel. This one has gone up about 30 or 40% in order to do the same amount of work that we did previously.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** So, this level of spending is just sort of keeping things going as they are right now?

**Mr. McLane:** Yeah, maintenance is a big part of it. I think as Gordon pointed out, that housing is actually bigger, from a section perspective. But yeah, it is an important thing. If we don't maintain it, we will – I guess, back to the hon. Member from

O'Leary-Inverness, is that we'll pay for it down the road, so to speak, with increased costs.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** You're right, I believe in doing it right the first time.

So, there's a 21.5 million increase in the highway budget, in the current budget year. What's the main reason for that big increase?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Well, the minister did indicate that with the increase in the price of petroleum over the summer, the input costs for this commodity have increased quite a bit. As well, there is, within this section, some additional bridge repairs that they're planning on doing as a result of Fiona that came through. There were some additional structures that need some attention before the end of the year.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** So, does basic materials, like the asphalt you use in paving; is that going up, similar to gas prices, for instance?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Yeah, there's a direct correlation. The input cost to make the asphalt has a high petroleum content.

**Chair:** Hon. members, we're having difficulty hearing.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** So, the same thing is true on bridges; you're overspending by 16 million. Is that a result of Fiona, or again, is that just general construction costs and materials?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** It's both. The price of steel is up. There is asphalt that is on the surface of the bridge, and as well, more structures than were planned needed to be looked after in the current fiscal year.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** You seem to be overspending on bridges almost every year. Should you adjust your Budget, maybe?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** That's always a consideration that we debate at capital budget time, what is the appropriate

number? There has been a pattern, for sure, that we're looking at regularly.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** There was an 8 million drop in spending on national and collector highways. Is that just because your planning changed, basically? You finished collector roads or whatever, and you're doing something else?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I'd have to get the specifics on what was planned versus what was done. I think they're, again, looking at this section on an overall basis on where the needs are. We're planning a budget in the fall of the year. They're looking at how the roads winter for a big part of what work gets done in the upcoming year, and then again, we're dealing with the increasing commodity costs.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** The 12 million overspent forecast in provincial paving, again, goes back to the increase of materials or whatever. It's not because you're actually paving more.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** They had a plan going in. Definitely, a big part of that was related to input costs. But, again, they would be looking at how the roads wintered and addressing those that didn't winter as good as they had hoped.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** If the 10 million budget swelled to 22 million, can we expect next year's budget to swell in equal amounts? Could you explain?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** From a budget office perspective, I hope not.

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

**Mr. Hammarlund:** I'm good for now. If I have anything else, I'll come back.

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

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

My colleague was just talking about the increase in the budgets and we were talking earlier about when you could bring back changes to the forecast. What oversight does the Department of Finance provide to ensure

that those over-expenditures are approved and allocated appropriately?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** As with all budgetary expenditures, if there are plans that change and there are additional requirements, they are required to come to Treasury Board for updates on their particular plans.

**Ms. Bell:** Can you explain the process, then? You're saying that transportation and infrastructure would have to go to Treasury Board at what point to be able to get double its budgeted amount for paving?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** When they have an indication that the work that they're planning and the funds they have available are not there to meet it, they'd come with what the revised plan would be. That plan would be approved or amended or denied, I guess, depending on what Treasury Board believed. If there was spending requirements for that, it would go then to Executive Council for consideration and special warrant.

**Ms. Bell:** Okay. So, that plan, that's the business case that the department has to bring that Treasury Board then reviews to make a determination on whether they're going to approve it? And that's happening before the work takes place?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** That would be happening before commitments go out. I believe they have phase one, phase two, throughout the year when they plan their road projects. It would happen before they would tender and get commitments out there to the industry for the second phase of the work.

**Ms. Bell:** The additional 12 million in paving, can I just clarify, is that additional projects or is that additional costs, because the costs have increased, or is it a bit of both?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** When I'm looking at the two lines between provincial paving and national collector, it's not just one for one.

**Ms. Bell:** Right.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** They would bring all their paving work together, although we designate it on two lines. We've talked

about it in the past, related to some of the national building program that can qualify some of those roads for cost-sharing, but again, they would bring their whole program together to Treasury Board for review and update.

**Ms. Bell:** The collector roads are obviously existing highways, but how much of our expenditure is going towards paving clay roads, like first-time paving? Are we increasing the amount of paved roads that we have?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I'm not sure on how many new kilometres of road. Again, they kind of classify it as rehabilitation or recap and then, if it would be a clay road, they'd have to actually build a road first, put a sub-structure down. It would be a different project. I'm not aware of how many clay roads were paved this year.

**An Hon. Member:** Call the hour.

**Clerk:** The hour has been called.

**Mr. McLane:** Mr. Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair, and the Chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

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

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having under consideration the grant of capital supply to His Majesty, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move the report of the committee be adopted.

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

The hon. Member from Morell-Donagh.

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

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Winsloe, that this House adjourn until Thursday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, at 1:00 p.m.

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

The Legislature adjourned until Thursday, November 17<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m.