

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Colin LaVie

Hansard, Published by Order of the Legislature

Second Session of the Sixty-sixth General Assembly

Wednesday, 9 November 2022

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE AND RECOGNITION OF GUESTS .....	5235
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS.....	5238
CHARLOTTETOWN-BRIGHTON (Carless Hillsborough Development) .....	5238
O'LEARY-INVERNESS (Ambulatory Care at Community Hospital) .....	5238
SUMMERSIDE-SOUTH DRIVE (Housing Crisis) .....	5239
ORAL QUESTIONS .....	5239
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Tabling of residential tenancy act).....	5240
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Dollars in government surplus).....	5240
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Using surplus to strengthen services) .....	5240
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Insulating Island from inflation costs) .....	5241
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Investments for health care system).....	5241
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Supports for teachers and children).....	5242
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Critical support for Islanders) .....	5242
MERMAID-STRATFORD (Review of case for UPEI medical school).....	5243
MERMAID-STRATFORD (Number of residency seats for UPEI).....	5243
MERMAID-STRATFORD (Applications for trained physicians).....	5244
MERMAID-STRATFORD (Changes needed to residency program).....	5244
MERMAID-STRATFORD (Plan to improve health care system) .....	5245
CHARLOTTETOWN-BRIGHTON (\$2 transit fare for all Islanders).....	5245
CHARLOTTETOWN-BRIGHTON (Expansion of transportation subsidies) .....	5245
SUMMERSIDE-WILMOT (Return of ministers' personal expenses) .....	5246
O'LEARY-INVERNESS (Maintaining integrity of regulatory bodies).....	5246
O'LEARY-INVERNESS (Overruling IRAC on fuel prices).....	5247
O'LEARY-INVERNESS (Reduction of provincial tax on fuel).....	5247
CHARLOTTETOWN-WEST ROYALTY (Talks with IRAC re: Maritime Electric) .....	5248
CHARLOTTETOWN-WEST ROYALTY (Overturning utility rates increase).....	5248
CHARLOTTETOWN-WEST ROYALTY (Power of IRAC under act) .....	5248
TIGNISH-PALMER ROAD (Preventing closure of CEC in West Prince).....	5249
TIGNISH-PALMER ROAD (Statistics prompting CEC closure).....	5250

TIGNISH-PALMER ROAD (Adequate replacements for CEC).....	5251
RUSTICO-EMERALD (Allowing shared driveways for residences) .....	5251
RUSTICO-EMERALD (Change regulations re: shared driveways).....	5252
RUSTICO-EMERALD (Provisions for garden suites).....	5252
SUMMERSIDE-WILMOT (Support to residents for Summerside Electric).....	5252
SUMMERSIDE-SOUTH DRIVE (Department responsible for Summerside electricity).....	5253
STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS .....	5253
EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING (Charlottetown Library Learning Centre).....	5253
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE (Access PEI Queens County).....	5254
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS.....	5255
MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT .....	5256
MOTION 120 – Condemning government’s response to Fiona (further) .....	5256
CHARLOTTETOWN-WEST ROYALTY .....	5256
CHARLOTTETOWN-VICTORIA PARK.....	5259
MERMAID-STRATFORD.....	5262
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION.....	5267
ORDERS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT .....	5268
SECOND READING AND COMMITTEE .....	5268
BILL 127 – Election Signage Act.....	5268
ORDERS OF THE DAY (GOVERNMENT) .....	5279
Capital Estimates .....	5279
ADJOURNED.....	5293

The Legislature sat at 1:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of  
Guests

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

Welcome back to my colleagues for another day of debate in the provincial Legislature, all those who have joined us in the public gallery, and those who join us online.

This morning I had the great privilege to participate in an event for the Canada Games, which as of tomorrow is now 100 days from beginning, and that's hard to imagine how far we've come, and not that we want to look too far into the future, with winter and everything coming, but a hundred days from tomorrow will be the start of the Canada Games here in Prince Edward Island.

There's starting to be a lot of excitement in communities across PEI. That was even further advanced today with the announcement that there will be a major arts and culture festival called IllumiNATION that will take place in 14 communities across Prince Edward Island. It will showcase feature artists from across Canada and Prince Edward Island in communities large and small, and it's going to be really, really exciting.

Thanks to Bryan McFeely and Wayne Carew and the growing numbers of volunteers across PEI for this event; certainly is starting to get really exciting.

I was also pleased to read that John Gaudet has been appointed for a two-year term as chair of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Foundation. John, of course, previously in life, was the CEO of Maritime Electric and has a lot of tremendous personal and corporate connections on Prince Edward Island; will no doubt do a great deal of work for that very important foundation. So, thanks, John, for stepping up there.

Later today, the Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning will represent our province in participating in the grand opening of the Charlottetown Library

Learning Centre, which is a most impressive facility on Queen Street in Charlottetown.

I'm happy our government was able to pick up the mantle from the previous government who signed the deals and got the project underway, so I thank them for their vision on that, and for all the people who made it a reality. It's really, really a most impressive facility, and it's really been – people have been flocking to it, so that's an exciting day.

And just finally, on a more somber note, I was very sad to hear that we lost Don MacCormac of Charlottetown. Don was just an absolutely wonderful man, if anyone who knew him. He started the PEI Connectors Program as part of the Chamber of Commerce and he was one of the first people to realize the importance of new Islanders and the impact they can have on community and business. It's amazing what he was able to accomplish in a short time.

Last year, 691 clients, new Islanders, accessed that service through the chamber. As I say, Don, just an absolutely gracious gentleman, who leaves behind a tremendous legacy of kindness and connection.

I'm sorry for his passing, but so grateful for the contributions that he's made to our province.

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 here today and those who are watching from home, and I particularly want to welcome those who are welcoming us in the gallery today.

I see some familiar faces here. I see Debbie Graham and Toby MacDonald and Matthew Murphy and friend.

But there are a couple of rarer birds with us today; very, very welcome rare birds.

In the back row there, I see Anna Keenan and Chad Walcott. Anna and Chad are both running to be the next leader of the Green Party of Canada. Anna is the first resident

Islander to perhaps take on the role as the leader of a large federal party. We're very proud of the work that you're doing and we wish you all the best.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** We've entered the Christmas craft fair season, and in my own district at Afton Community Centre, the Rice Point Women's Institute will be holding their annual Christmas Craft Fair this Saturday. It goes from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and there's free admission.

I know there are many schools across the province, some have actually already held their craft fairs and it's a wonderful way of supporting local artisans and to spend your money locally and to buy a unique Christmas present for the ones that you love.

So, I encourage everybody to get out to the local craft fairs here that we have; they're a wonderful place to build community and to keep our economy going.

My friend, Keptin John Joe Sark, has just recently released a new book called *Epekwiik: Stories and Histories of the Mi'kmaq Nation*. The book is a lovely – at least it looks lovely, I haven't picked up a copy yet.

It starts with the creation story of Epekwiik and it covers the Mi'kmaq political relations, and also their relationships with the English and French settler people here, and consequently, the need for peace and friendship treaties which were developed many hundreds of years ago.

John Joe shares his personal experiences with institutional racism, and he addresses the impact of things like residential schools on the Indigenous Mi'kmaq community here on Prince Edward Island.

Fittingly perhaps, for this week – and of course, yesterday was Indigenous Veterans Day – the book highlights the Mi'kmaq heroes and war veterans, including John Joe's own grandfather, Chief Jacob Sark. I look forward to picking up a copy of John Joe's book.

Also staying with this theme, on CBC Radio this morning, there was a featured story on a

partnership between the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Epekwiik Mi'kmaq, who are working together to conserve and protect Oulton's Island, off the North Shore here; *Kwesawe'k*, as it is known in Mi'kmaq.

The way this will happen is the Nature Conservancy will manage and care and own the Island for five years, and after that time, the title will be transferred to the Epekwiik Mi'kmaq. They will hold title and they will be stewards, and conserve this beautiful Island, in perpetuity.

I think that's a really beautiful and powerful thing that's happening. It's an over 200-acre island in Cascumpec Bay on the northeast shore of Prince Edward Island. I think that's just a lovely story. In the radio interview this morning, the individual from the Nature Conservancy said that every year they discover new natural things about the island; great blue herons nesting there, for example, and other creatures.

I want to thank the Nature Conservancy for this initiative, and also celebrate with the Mi'kmaq people for what will become part of their territory here – return as part of their territory here, excuse me.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

It's a pleasure to rise and say hello to everybody in District 14 and around Prince Edward Island, and recognize everybody in the gallery today.

Matthew Murphy's here and he brought along a friend, Madison Wood. She's studying criminology at Saint Mary's and she's hoping to get into a career of being a lawyer. She's on her break week and just came back to see what's going on here. Welcome to the proceedings.

Toby and Debbie, thanks a lot for your words of advice before. I cannot say what you told me to say when I talked to you earlier, but thanks for the suggestion.

Chad and Anna, thank you very much for spending a few minutes to chat today. I'm really proud of you both and what you're doing for democracy in our country. Chad, it was great pleasure to talk to you. Welcome to Prince Edward Island.

November is Men's Mental Health Month. It's a time to recognize the challenges faced by male-identifying individuals when it comes to addressing mental health. Those identifying as males are at higher risk of dying by suicide, and half as likely to seek help for their mental health than females, due to societal stigmas around men asking for help.

It's a reminder to us all to reach out, check on people, and it's a very important month. Just wanted to say that.

I was in the district this morning and I went to a Remembrance Day ceremony at PE Home; a lovely ceremony for the residents there. Paul MacKinnon, who is a veteran, laid the wreath. It was a very touching moment. He's an 80-year veteran; served in the armed forces. He's been married for 70 years. His family's watching, so I wanted to send a special shout-out to him. It was a very special moment.

Along with other residents that laid wreaths, Leo Gallant, Kathy Clow, Jerry MacDonald; the veterans at PE Home, Blanche Bennett – some of us might know him, Mike Noragowski, he's from Poland and he served in the Polish military; as well as Joe Handrahan. It's very important that their names be recognized.

The last thing, I want to say a special shout-out to – everybody likes Hallmark movies. Everybody likes Hallmark movies. Who doesn't? I mean, it's fantastic. This year we have a special Islander going to be starring in one of those Hallmark movies, *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*.

A resident of mine, Morgan Saunders, is starring in that film coming up this year.

Congratulations, Morgan. Keep it up.

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

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

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

It's a pleasure to rise today. Say hello to the folks in the gallery; Anna, Chad, and Debbie and Toby. Always wonderful to see you here.

I wanted to just acknowledge that I had the great opportunity today to participate in the Atlantic Canadian Basic Income Summit that was happening this morning. I had the pleasure to speak on a panel with Chief Darlene Bernard, Senator Kim Pate, MP Sean Casey, MHA from Newfoundland John Abbott, as well as MLA David Coon. It was really very exciting to be able to be a part of this discussion.

I always am encouraged when I see cross-party discussions around basic income. As we know, that's something we do very well here in Prince Edward Island. I'm excited to hear about next steps. As we know, it's great to talk about it but we need some action on this and we need it now more than ever.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

It's certainly a pleasure to rise today. Hello to all good folks watching in District 9. Hello, thank you, to all those who are joining us here in the gallery.

Matthew, Anna and Chad, thank you for having the courage and tenacity to put your name forward. Certainly, we wish you all the very best in the weeks to come.

Yesterday was a very exciting day for our country and our province. Ministers from across the country Responsible for the Status of Women, we met together in Nova Scotia and we endorsed the Nation Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.

This 10-year plan will mean major investments to support victims, survivors, and families here on Prince Edward Island. I'm really looking forward to the work that's going to ensue in the next couple of years. I'm really, really pleased to have been participating in that meeting.

As a reminder, the deadline to vote for your school board trustee is tomorrow. Ballots must be submitted to Elections PEI by noon tomorrow. For those who haven't already done so, I'd encourage you to get those ballots in.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I rise to recognize my good friend, Anna Keenan, and her running mate, I suppose, in a way, Chad Walcott. I do hope to stop by the Haviland Club later and have a conversation and meet you, Chad. I just wanted to rise and say hello.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Statements by Members

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

#### **Carless Hillsborough Development**

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

This government has taken the commendable action to develop much-needed housing on the 80 acres they own in Hillsborough Park. My suggestion would be to make this neighbourhood carless, as we see on Victoria Row.

While emergency and service vehicles, of course, would be allowed, the core of this development would be a Victoria Row-type of street, where pedestrians and bicycles rule. Just imagine, sitting on your terrace or in a café there and watch your kids rule the streets without any killer cars.

Furthermore, why not make it a requirement for living there not to own a car personally? Electric cars and vans would, of course, be available at the edges of the district, but on a shared basis. Experience shows that about one car per 10 persons is adequate for all. Electric commuter vans and bus service will, of course, also be available, so residents could be well-connected without the expense of owning their own cars.

The existing residents in Hillsborough Park who may be concerned about extra car traffic from the new development will also be reassured that there will only be hundreds of additional cars, instead of the thousands expected in a regular development.

A carless development would be much better than even a thousand electric cars and deserves funding from all levels of government. Such a carless development will show that this government is truly leading in Canada towards meeting our net zero goals.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Ambulatory Care at Community Hospital**

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

Community Hospital in O'Leary has been providing health care services to the West Prince region for many years.

The hospital's primary services include 13 acute care beds delivering palliative care, restorative care, and convalescent care. There is also an attached health centre and the long-term care component to the building.

The hospital also provides ambulatory care services, including IV therapies, minor treatments, and wound care, just to name a few.

This primary service was utilized extensively by the residents and prevents them from needing to be in the hospital for treatments that some require daily, and in turn, saves our health care system money and alleviates pressures on hospital bed demand in our primary acute care hospitals, such as in Summerside and Charlottetown.

So, imagine the surprise for patients when they showed up to their regular appointments at Community Hospital in early September and were told the ambulatory care services were moved to the Western Hospital in Alberton. No public announcement, no warning, no calls to any MLAs. It took many calls to confirm that this service was in fact removed, and once

the confirmation was received, it was also communicated that the service disruption would only be temporary. But there was no commitment as how long “temporary” actually would be.

The frustrations growing due to not receiving any updates by this government, I was about to call the government out on this issue when I did get a call from Health PEI saying this service would be reinstated October 25<sup>th</sup>. I will give Health PEI credit for reinstating this vital service, but it needs to be more informative and provide a better vision to Islanders on health care delivery in rural hospitals.

Islanders reliant on these services deserve to know in advance closures, disruptions and the relocation of services.

To conclude, ambulatory care services were working well before the removal, and today, ambulatory care RN Jessica Howard is doing a wonderful job delivering those ambulatory care services with additional supports that may be forthcoming.

I surely hope this government wasn't purposely trying to make this important service fail so it could have an excuse as to why other services could be removed or relocated from Community Hospital in O'Leary, or in any other location in Western PEI, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Housing Crisis

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

It's been incredibly challenging for small businesses across the Island to deal with a myriad of issues that had arisen over the years, but never has it ever been as challenging as it is right now.

I travel from tip to tip on this Island talking to other Islanders, many who are either employed by a small business or run one. There is so much talk of the labour shortage. It's in every industry, not just construction or tourism or any other sector. It's everywhere.

No one can understand where all of the willing workers seem to have gone. Well, I can share a bit of insight.

It's in part because of the house of cards that our government has built.

A 30-something Islander who lived at home with parents and wanted to strike out and start his own home with a partner; a good paying job, lots of room to advance in that job, but they're gone. Why? There was no affordable housing solution for him. He could see no path forward on PEI. That employee moved to another province where housing is not such an obstacle.

I've spoken with a teacher who has a large family and could not find suitable housing after being renocticed; more loss for PEI due to housing.

The City of Summerside has issued open pleas to try and find housing for medical professionals who would come if only there was a place to live.

The housing crisis is making everything worse. The inability of this government to build housing units is making the housing crisis worse. This government's housing failures are making everything worse.

That's the house of cards.

A plan to address it is good. A plan to address it after three years of denying the issue is too little, too late.

The timing of the plan is not lost on Islanders, either. It shouldn't take a run up to an election to get government moving on making a plan to fix the wicked problems we face, yet here we are.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

### Tabling of residential tenancy act

Question to the Minister of Social Development and Housing: Will you be tabling the long-overdue residential tenancy act today?

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

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

No, not today. The final touches were put on it this morning. I believe my department is going to reach out to both the official opposition and the third party to meet on Tuesday morning, and it will be tabled on Tuesday.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, government announced it would be spending \$58 million in inflation support payments, and that was announced, of course, on the same day that the Auditor General reported that the Province had run an 83.8 million surplus in the previous fiscal year.

In the current fiscal year, this year, we've had record levels of inflation, and the budget passed this spring almost certainly underestimated our revenues for the year.

### Dollars in government surplus

A question to the Premier: Despite this inflation support package, how many more millions is your government sitting on?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. leader for the question.

As he knows, we do report quarterly on the budgetary updates. If things change, we will share that with Islanders.

As of today, I think many aspects of the economy have performed better than maybe we had forecast, but there's also been a number of challenges, as well. We've been forced to spend in excess of \$100 million,

perhaps, from Hurricane Fiona, which we didn't budget for, of course. So, I don't know where it stands right now.

But I will say again to Islanders, if we have more money that we can put into their pockets to help shield them from the rising cost of living on Prince Edward Island, I think we've demonstrated at a level few others have in the past that we'll do that and we'll continue to do it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Islanders are struggling. They're suffering. It's not just individuals who are challenged though. Islanders are watching many of their beloved institutions – their hospitals, their schools, their long-term care homes – struggling with systemic challenges.

Investing in stronger public services is a really important way to help Islanders through tough times and to help our province prepare for the future.

### Using surplus to strengthen services

To the Premier: Which public services are you going to strengthen with the extra money you're sitting on?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Mr. Speaker, I guess in first blush, we just announced over \$300 million in public spending, so I think that's a pretty big capital investment, that we're trying to make sure we move forward on some of the progress that we've made in terms of housing and other advancements.

At the same time, we know there are challenges in the economic outlook in the country and beyond, and we're trying our very best to keep the economy stimulated and to shield Islanders the best we can from cost of living, Mr. Speaker, and as I say, we'll continue to do that.



Thank you so much.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Yeah, it's great that government wants to fire its money gun around in supporting Islanders, but you can hardly consider that to be long-term planning and to address the affordability crisis that we have here on Prince Edward Island.

Even if we can get our inflation under control next year, it doesn't mean the prices are actually going to go down or the cost of living is decreasing. It's just going to go up a little slower.

Our challenges with heating costs are not going away any time soon. Our challenges with shelter costs are not going away any time soon. Our challenges with food prices are not going away any time soon.

#### **Insulating Island from inflation costs**

To the Premier: How is your government making the Island better insulated against these pricing shocks?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Mr. Speaker, we're a small Island in the gulf of a big ocean in a big world. There's a lot of factors that have hit our shore that are beyond our control. We're working hard to try to reduce the cost and to shield Islanders from the cost of living, but the volatility in the world markets when it comes to oil, for example, which is driving up the costs of diesel fuel, of home heating, of gasoline, and other things, are things that are out of our control.

We continue to look at programs which we can help in the short term, and we continue to look at what we can do from a long-term perspective to shield Islanders. But we have to understand, as I say, we're a small Island in the middle of a gulf and a great big world, and those waves hit our shore, they hit us hard sometimes, and I think the last few months, we were able to work through that. But we know there's challenging days ahead and we're going to try to do our best to get Islanders through it, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

From my point of view, it's really worrying that the Premier of this province feels he has so little control over our economic destiny because –

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** – there are many things we could do here.

We could regulate and de-commodify the housing market. We could invest heavily in supporting local agriculture and food processing. We can wean ourselves, continue to transition off fossil fuels.

All of those things, this government has failed to move on substantially in the last little while, and that's a real failure with this government.

Our health care system is in dire crisis as well, and all of this, all the things that this Premier thinks he can do is just throw money at the front line, or perhaps I should be more accurate, some of the front line.

This surplus would go a long way in providing those financial bonuses to all essential workers, as well as doing all kinds of other great things within the health care system.

#### **Investments for health care system**

A question to the Premier: You have the money. When will we see these investments in health care, or are you holding them back to use for your next election promise?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Mr. Speaker, I've never seen a party so fixated on an election as the opposition party. It's all they talk about, is the election. There's going to be an election in 2023. Why don't we wait until 2023 to have the election?

We've been working every day to try to get Islanders through this. He just used two questions to complain that we had a surplus and now he's saying he's blaming me for

not having a surplus. I don't know where he's coming from with that smorgasbord that led up to the question.

All I can say is we're doing the very best we can in the most challenging times facing our province and that's all any premier can do, and whoever the next premier is, if it's you or somebody else, you'll do the same.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

I think I can assure you that I will not be exactly the same as you, Premier, if I should follow in your footsteps in that seat.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** I've spoken to many teachers, also, who are struggling, and who can blame them, really? For three years now, they have had an unprecedented series of crises thrown at them and they've managed to adapt time and time and time again.

At the Teachers' Federation meeting last week, I spoke to many teachers who say, here they are in October and November, and they're feeling as they typically do in April or May. They're exhausted. They're worn out.

### **Supports for teachers and children**

A question to the minister of education: Millions of dollars would go a long way to supporting our teachers who have been through so much and, consequently, supporting and helping our children. What supports have you been advocating for around the Cabinet table?

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

**Premier King:** How long do you have?

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

Yeah, how long do I have? Precisely. I recognize that the last couple of years have

been tremendously challenging on our education staff and I truly can't thank them enough for all of the ways in which they've supported children and families.

I know I have the list of the investments, the frontline investments we've made over the last couple of years. For this budget year, we added 40 more frontline staff and then at the end of the summer, we went back to Treasury Board and we added 34 more frontline staff. And then last week, we went back to Treasury Board again to add 25 more frontline staff, recognizing, again, the importance of these staff and the amount of work that they do take on.

We want to be there to support them and we need to be there to support our kids, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

There is one thing that I will say about this government. They've been consistent in three areas: they have an absence of vision, they have a failure to plan, and they have a complete inability to execute.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Government's job is to make sure that when you or your loved one is sick, that there is frontline medical staff there to take care of you; to make sure that when you send your child to school, that they are given all the tools that they need to be to become the best person that they can be. The government is there so that, as your parents and your grandparents get older, that there will be supports to care for them.

### **Critical support for Islanders**

A question to the Premier: Why have you given up on all these critical things?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Well, hot school lunch program, paying what you can for every

single student in Prince Edward Island; I don't think that's giving up.

\$10-a-day child care for Prince Edward Islanders working to raise a family; I don't think that's giving up.

I don't know who's writing the questions over there, Mr. Speaker, but I think they should get another pen out and try again.

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

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

**Ms. Beaton:** Mr. Speaker, this government recently announced a commitment of over \$44 million to build a new medical school at UPEI. While this is an admirable project, the government has an obligation to Islanders to spend money responsibly.

Usually when an organization approaches government for funding, they follow a rigorous process and they're required to submit an extensive plan and a business case.

#### **Review of case for UPEI medical school**

Question to the Minister of Finance: Have you reviewed the business case on the new UPEI medical school, and if so, will you table it?

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

**Mr. McLane:** Thank you for the question.

Obviously, this is a big investment in health care. I think the Premier said it correctly that it should have been done probably 10 years ago. We're not going to wait another 10 years in order to do this.

Our ability to produce doctors and retain them here is important, and also the benefits of a large clinic at UPEI will definitely benefit Islanders.

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

**Ms. Beaton:** Well, that's an answer, but it's not the answer to the question that I asked.

You would think that the Minister of Finance who just committed \$44 million to a massive program would actually be able to tell me what the business case looks like.

I have had many conversations with physicians, and most point to expanding the Family Medicine Residency Program as being instrumental in adding physicians to the PEI health care system.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Good.

**Ms. Beaton:** In November of 2019, the former minister actually promised to do this, and he tabled a document that said that he would increase it from five places to seven places.

#### **Number of residency seats for UPEI**

Question to the minister of health: How many residency seats do we have currently?

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

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

There has been no increase in the number of residency seats –

**An Hon. Member:** Wow.

**Mr. Hudson:** – but with that, we are actively working with Dalhousie University to have those increased, and that is just one portion of the initiatives that this government is taking and will continue to take with regard to the stabilization of our health care system.

Thank you.

**Ms. Beaton:** Mr. Speaker, that's verbatim of what the former minister said in 2019. Three years, you're still saying the same thing.

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

**Ms. Beaton:** PEI funds five residency seats for family physicians, and we all know that we're in desperate need of family physicians here in this province. One of those seats is dedicated to somebody who is trained outside of Canada.

**Applications for trained physicians**

Question to the minister of health:  
Approximately how many applications do we receive for that one spot for a physician who is trained outside of Canada?

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

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

I do find it a bit ironic that the previous questions came across, with regard to the questions that were put forward to the hon. Minister of Finance, you could read into it that the hon. member was against a medical school.

**Some Hon. Members:** No, no, no.

**An Hon. Member:** Yeah.

**Mr. Hudson:** What we need here is a multi-pronged approach and that's exactly what we do have. We are investing in a medical school right here in the Province of PEI.

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

**Mr. Hudson:** We're increasing the number of seats with our partners at UPEI in the RN program. With our partners at Holland College, we're increasing the LPN seats. We're increasing the intakes of RCWs right across the province. It's a multi-pronged approach, and we will get it done.

Thank you.

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

**Ms. Beaton:** You'd think that the Province is actually against it because no plan is a plan to fail, and you don't have a plan.

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

**Ms. Bernard:** No plan.

**Ms. Beaton:** So, let me tell you how many people have actually applied for that one residency seat for somebody that was trained outside of Canada: hundreds. Hundreds, and there's one seat that they're applying for. So, let me tell you, you've got a lot of work

to do there, Mr. Speaker – or the other side does.

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

**Ms. Beaton:** So, most of the provinces have a process that would allow somebody who's trained outside of Canada to actually, in some capacity, work within their system. PEI doesn't have this.

**Changes needed to residency program**

Question to the minister: It's been three years of a worsening doctor shortage and a ballooning patient registry. Why have you made no changes to a residency program to help doctors get to the front line quicker?

**Ms. Bernard:** Good question.

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

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

Over the last three days, I attended First Ministers' of health meeting in Vancouver. And there is, I will be the first to admit, every health minister admitted we have a crisis right across this great country of ours.

But with that, you're looking at the initiatives that a number of different jurisdictions are taking, the initiatives that we're taking, and I am proud to say that PEI, with regard to the initiatives, with regard to the stabilization, that we are going to be bringing forward and providing for health care for Islanders, we're at the lead of the pack.

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

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

But you see, some of these provinces are self-made by this government because they won't move when they have a clear solution put forward to them.

The Premier and the minister have spent millions on pricey photo ops like the mental health research centre, the mental health alliance and the medical school, but by the

time those initiatives see results, we won't have a front line left. The Premier must realize now that throwing money to silence frontline health care workers, throwing money at them is not going to solve your issue.

### **Plan to improve health care system**

Question to the minister: The health care system was in bad shape when it was handed to you when you took office, but it's crumbled under your leadership. When will you show Islanders the plan to turn this rig around?

**Ms. Bernard:** Good question.

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

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

I would have to say to the hon. member, if she had been listening to my response to the previous question, I highlighted a number of different initiatives that are going to turn this ship around, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**An Hon. Member:** It's not a Sea-Doo.

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

Islanders living close to the new rural bus lines must be happy to pay only a \$2 fare, even for very long trips. Seniors and monthly users get even better discounts, and children travel for free.

However, Islanders living further from the bus lines, or Islanders for whom the limited bus schedules do not work, are not so lucky. They must drive to the bus stop or to work and face the rising cost of gas.

### **\$2 transit fare for all Islanders**

Question to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure: Should all Islanders not be able to get transportation to where they need to go for the \$2 fare?

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

**Mr. Deagle:** Yes, hon. member. I would agree with that. I think we will look at expanding this service in the near future.

Now, this won't solve the issue that the member brought up, but we have had a number of larger buses, 52-seat buses, to help alleviate some of the pressure that we have on our routes; from Summerside to Charlottetown, Charlottetown to Summerside, and actually, Souris to Charlottetown, because the demand has actually skyrocketed, and we want to make sure that service is there.

Yes, I do agree that all Islanders should be able to access this service.

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

**Mr. Hammarlund:** I actually don't believe that bigger buses are the answer. The answer is more frequent departures.

Recent numbers by the department indicate costs as high as \$20 per bus ride; not really surprising when we are beginning a regularly scheduled bus line.

### **Expansion of transportation subsidies**

Question to the minister: If bus lines receive that kind of subsidy, should we not provide the same subsidy per passenger to other forms of transportation?

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

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

The issue you had mentioned, more frequent departures and whatnot, is that a lot of people want to leave at the same time. We want to make sure that the people that need to get to Charlottetown or to Summerside, or Souris to Charlottetown for, say, 8:00 a.m., are all able to do that at that time. So, we've added larger buses to try and accommodate that.

To your question, I'm open to ideas. Perhaps we can sit down and we can discuss those at some point. I'm not sure exactly which other

modes and avenues you would be thinking, but I'm certainly open to any idea.

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

**Mr. Hammarlund:** Well, it's good to hear that we have a rush hour, even on the bus routes.

If the government were to provide a broader subsidy, we could see lots of creative solutions from Islanders. For instance, a minivan with six passengers could be as cheap as a half-full bus and offer door-to-door service by somebody like Kari.

Question to the minister: Why not offer a subsidy to all transportation that is as cheap, or cheaper, than subsidized bus routes?

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

**Mr. Deagle:** I'm not exactly sure what the hon. member is getting at, there. We can't just subsidize everything, obviously.

But as I said, we can sit down and we can discuss some ideas, if the hon. member has any, on how we can improve our rural transit system. It's one we're quite proud of and I think Islanders are taking us up on it, with the ever-increasing price of fuel.

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

**Ms. Lund:** Mr. Speaker, in the spring, we learned of a number of examples of ministers buying things for themselves with taxpayers' money, while at the same time, telling Islanders to tighten their belts; things like trailer hitches and frequent carwashes and then some car shampoo products come to mind.

We were told that those expenses, which were clearly personal expenses, were going to be repaid to taxpayers.

### **Return of ministers' personal expenses**

My question is to the finance minister: Which of these expense claims, which were clearly personal expenses, have been returned to Islanders, and which ones are still outstanding?

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

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

As you know, I've only been in this role for about a hundred days, so I have not actually looked at that, and I would certainly bring any of that back to the House for the member to look at.

Thank you.

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

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

Last week, we saw a legislative amendment pass involving government overturning an independent regulatory body's decision regarding maximum allowed rent increases for 2023.

I did not offer my support on that, as I felt it sets a dangerous precedent for governments involved in overturning independent organizations that are basically set up to represent both parties.

### **Maintaining integrity of regulatory bodies**

Question to the Premier: As you have overturned a previous Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission decision, will we be seeing changes to the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission that many of your MLAs in your caucus have long advocated for, to avoid having jeopardizing the integrity of any of their independent arms organizations?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Mr. Speaker, I don't quite understand the question and how it was phrased toward the end there, but I think we all know that the government's desire and this Legislature's overwhelming desire to try to shield Islanders from a rent increase that was incredibly high, with not a whole lot of understanding of how it was reached, I think was a good move.

It wouldn't be my general nature to want to intervene on things like this, but I would also say, I think where you're trying to get with the question, and I will make this presumption, I think that IRAC is at a time

where we could review what they do and how they do it and why they do it. I've often wondered if IRAC should be in the business of being the arbiter of both the landlord and the tenant. I think there's an opportunity to take a look at IRAC and look at other regulatory bodies in the country and see how they do it and prepare for the next 30 years, Mr. Speaker.

Yeah, so, I think I would be open to that, yes.

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Interesting, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission approved another unscheduled price adjustment of 21.6 cents a litre increase on diesel and a whopping 23.6 cents a litre increase on home heating oil. This increase will negatively impact many hardworking Islanders, while petroleum companies show large profits and the PEI government rakes in extra moneys on the taxes off these hardworking Islanders.

### **Overruling IRAC on fuel prices**

Will the Premier overrule IRAC and quash this unscheduled price increase and freeze diesel and home heating oil prices to Islanders?

**Mr. McNeilly:** Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Well, Mr. Speaker, even though it's the same body, I think there are two different things that we're talking about here.

When you look at the price of fuel, there's about 76 different things that they look at and there's a formula that IRAC looks at to reach these prices, based on a number of things.

That wasn't the case when it came to increasing the rent. There wasn't a defined formula. There wasn't really a process that I thought was fair and full. So, I think if we ever got to a point where there was a fair and reasonable formula, it wouldn't be the government's intention to intervene. That's

why we intervened, and I'm certainly not going to apologize for trying to keep rents lower, Mr. Speaker, in this difficult time.

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, I want to note that yesterday, just on diesel fuel alone on PEI, the Province of PEI took in an extra two cents a litre on the thousands of litres burned on Prince Edward Island.

Now, it takes in over 51 cents of taxes on diesel fuel in this province.

This Premier's slogan was always about people. What about farmers who have to use diesel fuel to haul potatoes to the processing plant or truckers hauling goods to PEI retailers and grocery stores?

### **Reduction of provincial tax on fuel**

Premier, will you immediately reduce the provincial portion of the tax on the diesel fuel? You can do that.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Mr. Speaker, reducing the provincial portion of HST is a bit of a back-and-forth with the federal government that the federal government traditionally hasn't been open to discussing.

When his government harmonized the tax, there was a few carve-offs that the government tried to get. They didn't try to get any of the tax off gas and diesel, but I'm not going to look back. I'll just state the obvious.

Also, we have managed, in our most recent carbon reduction, our carbon tax discussion with the feds in the process, so that we now have in place to get a few carve-outs for home heating and things like that.

We're trying to do the best we can but to get the provincial portion off of HST with the federal government, I don't think that's a path that we can go down.

But we continue, and I would say that – I think it was the minister was telling me

yesterday – \$25 million would be the tax that we would bring in, that you talk about, and we gave back \$59 million, Mr. Speaker, so I think we're doing okay.

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

**Mr. McNeilly:** Mr. Speaker, during Hurricane Fiona, we saw Islanders without electricity, some without running water for many, many days.

We had our provincial EMO director stating: Who would have thought we'd ever see a province-wide power outage? I, for one, say, well, I would think that the EMO office would be up to date on that.

There has been widespread criticism around the time that it took to restore power back to the services, Maritime Electric, which is not the fault of hard-working grounds crew, but it speaks to the utility's preparedness and risk mitigation.

#### **Talks with IRAC re: Maritime Electric**

Question to the minister responsible for IRAC: Have you spoken with IRAC regarding what obligations under the *Electric Power Act* Maritime Electric may or may not have failed to fulfil?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Mr. Speaker, once again, I don't quite understand the question coming from the hon. member there. Perhaps he could clarify it a little bit.

To suggest that EMO was somehow derelict in their duties because we had the worst storm in Canadian history, I think is – it's just, I don't think it's a narrative that Islanders are buying into, Mr. Speaker, but thank you very much.

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

**Mr. McNeilly:** I just want to clarify that you're not the minister responsible for IRAC, first of all.

The cost associated with restoring power after Hurricane Fiona will be enormous. An application by Maritime Electric to IRAC

for an increase to their vegetation management budget was denied, as it was believed the 0.8% increase to the utility rate would be too high for customers.

#### **Overturning utility rates increase**

Question to the minister responsible for IRAC: If an application to IRAC is submitted to raise utility rates, which we assume it will be, will the minister commit to stepping in and overturning such an IRAC decision?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I'll take that question as well because the first day after the hurricane, when the prime minister came and we met at the Charlottetown Airport, I asked him if we would include all of the costs that Maritime Electric would take to re-establish power in Prince Edward Island and the cost, if they would be able to include that in the disaster financial program and to shield Islanders from future rent increases.

The prime minister told me that that was something that he thought would be fair and that he would entertain, Mr. Speaker.

We were on this long before he even thought of it, so, yes.

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

**Mr. McNeilly:** So, that was yes, you will intervene?

**Premier King:** Don't need to intervene because the federal government (Indistinct)

**Mr. McNeilly:** For future rate increases?

Under Section 32 of the *Electric Power Act*, it grants IRAC the ability to perform a summary investigation into Maritime Electric and it says, quote: If supply of electricity or energy or of any service rendered by the public utility has been interrupted or caused hardship or inconvenience to consumers of electricity or other customers of the public utility.

#### **Power of IRAC under act**



Question to the minister responsible for IRAC: Have you or will you, as the minister responsible for IRAC, advocate for them to enact their powers under Section 32 as another means of gathering information? We need to ensure Islanders are not put in this position in future events.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not quite sure where the hon. member is trying to go with this but, again, I think under the current structure that we have, the minister of environment, who is not here, has already said we were going to intervene in the current process for Maritime Electric to increase rates because we are not sure that they are justified. Some of the numbers they were talking about were higher than we thought.

So, yes, we'll always try to intervene when it's about fairness for Islanders, but in connection to Fiona, as I said, there's not even a process yet to begin where this might lead to. We've asked the federal government and they have committed to paying for the cost so it doesn't have to be made up through an increase that the hon. member is talking about.

The simple answer would be: Anything that we can do to try to keep rates lower and predictable and consistent, Mr. Speaker, we will always try to do that, yes.

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

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

Every legislative session since this past election, I've had to stand up in this House multiple times and advocate and plead to this government for the people that I represent and for the people that the Minister of Health and Wellness represents, and that's to have the same access to health care as those living anywhere else on Prince Edward Island.

Last Thursday, we have seen our health care threatened again in West Prince with the Western Hospital CEC being closed until at least January 2023.

**Preventing closure of CEC in West Prince**

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: As a fellow West Prince resident, this is your backyard, and you have an opportunity to do something great here. What did you do to prevent this closure, and what are you doing to get this service opening and back before January 2023?

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

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

I do appreciate the member bringing this question forward.

Before I get into the gist of answering the question though, I do want to take the opportunity, as I've acknowledged before, we have a crisis in health care, no doubt about it. I want to give a shout-out, I want to give a thank you to all of our workers, all of our frontline workers that have went above –

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

**Mr. Hudson:** – went above and beyond over the last number of months.

As I had mentioned before this afternoon, I had the opportunity to attend First Ministers' of health meetings. We have seen this same situation right across the country. And yes, there are actions that end up being taken as a result of the lack of vision previously, I will have to say.

**Mr. Henderson:** (Indistinct) praised for everything we were doing in (Indistinct) –

**Speaker:** Order! Order!

Minister has the floor.

**Premier King:** Praised by who?

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

**Speaker:** Minister has the floor.

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

**Mr. Hudson:** With that, Mr. Speaker, again, yes, I have, and I will always advocate for western PEI and for rural Islanders and for rural health care.

A real good example of that is the commitment that this government made to the Tignish Medical Centre to provide core funding of 100,000 a year over a five-year period, something that the previous administration really struggled to do.

Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Speaker:** Okay, members.

Order! Order!

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

I'm happy to say that since I got elected in 2011, every year, Tignish Health Centre has gotten core funding or operating funding because of my advocacy.

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

**Mr. Perry:** So, I want to thank you for bringing that up again and giving me the acknowledgement for working so hard on it.

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

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

**Mr. Perry:** Mr. Speaker, when this government closed the Western Hospital CEC this summer after weeks of daily closures, along with closures of the emergency department, the press release sent out by the government stated that, statistically, only 0.8 people were accessing the emergency care centre overnight, and yesterday, the Premier stated how the CEC wasn't terribly utilized, which still insults me and many people in my area as well.

**Statistics prompting CEC closure**

Question to the minister: Take statistics out of this. If your loved one, your spouse, your brother, your sister, or your child was that 0.8 person needing emergency care, would statistics really matter? Would they really matter then, minister? Would it matter if it was terribly –

**Speaker:** Question.

**Mr. Perry:** – utilized?

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

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

With regard to the 0.8%, yes, we have to provide the services in the most appropriate location that we absolutely can.

But you look at some of the initiatives that we've taken. We've heard from the third party previously with regard to ambulance response times. Ambulance response times are critical in rural Prince Edward Island. That's one of the reasons that we have taken the initiative of establishing transfer units, so that our ambulances, our emergency response ambulance units will be able to respond more rapidly.

We have seen that some of the things that we have been doing, that previous administrations have been doing, they haven't been working. We do have to adjust. We do have to make changes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

When it was announced that the member who represents West Prince in the Executive Council would be the minister of health, there was a beacon of light, of hope, for West Prince residents.

**Mr. Henderson:** Yeah, there was, a little bit.

**Mr. Perry:** This was his opportunity to shine.

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

**Mr. Perry:** Instead, we have a flickering candle just grasping onto that last bit of wax.

**Mr. Henderson:** Oh, yeah.

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

**Mr. Perry:** Mr. Speaker, I want the Minister of Health and Wellness to step out of his Cabinet portfolio when he answers this question and answer it like the MLA for Alberton-Bloomfield.

### **Adequate replacements for CEC**

To the MLA for Alberton-Bloomfield: Can you stand up in this House and tell your residents and mine that a rapid response unit that can not transfer a patient, and an ambulance parked an hour away in Summerside until 10:00 p.m., if that is adequate replacement for the Collaborative Emergency Centre of Western Hospital.

**Mr. Henderson:** Seems a bit sketchy to me.

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

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

I'm going to have to back to the answer and the comments that I have made previously numerous times today.

Yes, there are challenges. There's a crisis in health care right across this country, and we are no different than any other jurisdiction, any other province.

We do have the vision, we have the initiatives with the things that we are working on, and the dedicated staff that we have there right now. But we have to be able to supplement that staff. We have to be able to increase the numbers of that staff.

That is the reason that we are pursuing with a medical school, that we are increasing the RN seats, the LPN seats, the RCW seats, so that we will not –

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

**Mr. Hudson:** – so that we will not see ourselves in situations like we see right across the country, and yes, that we have seen here in our beautiful Province of PEI, where initiatives that have to be taken because of lack of health human resources have been.

We have a vision. We will get there, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

One thing that comes up often in my constituency, if families have a parcel of land, and they would like to just basically subdivide it and have their brother, their sister, or their aunt or uncle live next door. Time and time again, these applications are denied because they say you are not allowed to share a driveway. You have to put in a new driveway, and then the new driveway doesn't meet sightline requirements, and it's really hampering the ability to provide more housing, in my district, at least.

### **Allowing shared driveways for residences**

A question to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, this is *Roads Act*, Highway Access Regulations: Would you consider changing regulations to allow at least two permanent residences to access a shared driveway, for access?

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

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

Yeah, that's something I would be willing to look at. I actually do believe that our department can play a role in helping with housing because if you actually look at a lot of the road classifications, they need to be changed. So, we've actually hired someone in the department to go through the thousands of roads that we have to work on changing the classifications.

It's going to take a bit of time, but it's something that we're going to get done so that there aren't roadblocks to subdividing, building homes on roads; obviously, not our main arterial roads, but there are side roads

and secondary roads that we could easily build on, but right now the regulations and laws don't allow it.

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

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

One of the things in the regulations that is perplexing to me and it's very frustrating to my constituents is, if these are not year-round permanent residences, but in fact there are multiple cottages on that same lot, they are allowed to use that singular driveway and that single access, and they're given the permit to build these multiple cottages.

So, I'm glad to hear you're open to that.

### **Change regulations re: shared driveways**

On the flip side, I have constituents who own these cottage rental business subdivisions who are thinking of turning those into permanent year-round housing. Will you commit to helping them do that, and changing the regulations, so that they can be in compliance?

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

**Mr. Deagle:** It would be certainly be something I'm willing to look at, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

My constituents are really trying to be creative and do everything they can to provide housing on their existing lots.

One thing that's defined in our regulations, this would be the Subdivision and Development Regulations, are what are called garden suites. There are provisions that allow garden suites, less than 800 square feet and less than – they're smaller single-unit dwellings; that one level.

But the most interesting thing is that the regulations limit the use to the parents or grandparents of the owners who live on the

lot. If you want to build a garden suite for your children (Indistinct) –

**Speaker:** We don't need regulations. We need a question.

### **Provisions for garden suites**

**Mr. Trivers:** So, the question is –

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

**Mr. Trivers:** – why are the regulations in place, and when will they be updated to allow garden suites to be used for children of people who own the lot?

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

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

I'm open to sitting down, perhaps, with the member, and looking at these regulations in particular. I'll be honest, I'm not 100% familiar with them, but something I'm willing to go back to the department and look into.

As I said, we've hired someone; I think it's actually in the minister of agriculture's department, that in particular. But as I mentioned on the road classifications, we are looking at that, and we're going to try to change a significant number of our road classifications so we can remove some barriers to people who want to build homes.

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

**Ms. Lund:** Mr. Speaker, roughly 600 homes in Summerside are still with Maritime Electric. As you can imagine, since Fiona, we've had far more calls from people who are wondering why they're not allowed to switch over to Summerside Electric.

This is an issue that was raised nearly two years ago, to three ministers and the Premier. Still, government hasn't taken one step forward to solving this.

### **Support to residents for Summerside Electric**

My question is to the Minister of Fisheries and Communities: Why haven't you

supported the City of Summerside in their ask to be allowed to serve all of their own residents?

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

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

This is a very complex issue when you're dealing with two corporations, the corporation of the City of Summerside and also the corporation of Maritime Electric. I know the minister of environment, who's not here today, and climate action change, he was very aware of this situation, as, of course, energy falls under his portfolio.

As the minister responsible for fisheries and communities, I do support some kind of resolution or some kind of solving of this so that it benefits both the ratepayers of Maritime Electric and also the ratepayers of the City of Summerside.

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

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

We've been told this minister took this issue to Cabinet; took it to the minister of energy, and still, nothing.

Quote: The information provided to me by the municipality of Summerside was passed on to the appropriate department for action. End quote. Minister of communities and fisheries.

Six months ago, that's what the minister said about this issue and the 2021 formal request from Summerside City Hall.

### **Department responsible for Summerside electricity**

Question to the minister: We know there are quarterly meetings between Maritime Electric, the Premier, the minister of energy, and other government reps. Documents show the issue has not been on the agenda. What is the proper department who should have been ensuring Summerside's request was addressed?

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

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

As I stated before, this is a matter between the corporation of the City of Summerside and the corporation of Maritime Electric. That has been passed on to the appropriate department, which is the department of climate change.

As a minister of the municipalities, we support that both parties can get together and come to some kind of resolution that actually benefits the City of Summerside residents, and that benefits the Maritime Electric residents.

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

**Speaker:** End of Question Period.

### Statements by Ministers

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

### **Charlottetown Library Learning Centre**

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

This afternoon, we will be cutting the ribbon to officially celebrate the grand opening of the Charlottetown Library Learning Centre.

The new centre is 42,000 square feet, more than triple the size of the former Confederation Centre Public Library. It covers the entire ground floor of the Dominion Building in the heart of downtown Charlottetown.

Since opening its doors this summer, the library learning centre has welcomed an average of a thousand people daily.

I want to thank our staff for the tremendous amount of work and dedication they have shown over the past few months. I also want to thank the volunteers with friends of the library, the Charlottetown Area Development Corporation, and of course, the board of directors of the Charlottetown Library Learning Centre Inc.

This is an exciting new chapter. This amazing new facility will be the lifeblood of the community for so many people.

We have families who rely on the centre for free programming, and new parents who build friendships in our Wiggles and Giggles program and our family storytimes.

We have youth who use this as a safe place to socialize and build friendships. There's one gentleman who comes into the Library Learning Centre almost every day to sit, have a cup of coffee, and read the daily news.

Since this beautiful new centre opened, there hasn't been an afternoon when the makerspace hasn't been full of people experiencing the virtual reality headsets or trying out the 3D printers or the sewing machines. My kids sure love them.

This space has truly come alive over the past few months and today is a day to celebrate that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Bernard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, minister, for bringing this statement forward.

It is certainly an impressive space. I love that we're not just calling it a library, that we're calling it a learning centre. I would even take it a step further. It's really a community hub. There's so many things happening in there. You can get a coffee and sit and read the paper. You can sit outside. There's community rooms and spaces. Was there the other night for the pinning bee. There's all kinds of things happening in this space and it's for the whole family.

One of the things, I think I mentioned this before, but one of the things that really made me appreciate that space was the fact that it was even considered. They put a child lens into what they did and, so, raised the floor up so that children would be at eye level with adults as they walked by. I thought that that was really a beautiful thing.

There was also a youth lens put on this as we consider, there's video gaming space, there's that really cool maker space, and I was very obsessed with that printer for an evening when I was in there.

It is really and truly an incredible space. There really is something for everybody in there. There's private spaces, there's group spaces, there's rooms. There's just everything that you can imagine.

If you haven't checked it out, I really encourage you to do so. It's a beautiful space and certainly a space we can be proud of.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. McNeilly:** This is a fantastic, a fantastic project for Charlottetown. I think it's going to change the way we educate, change the way we gather, and just be a resource for many years to come.

This was done right. It took a lot of work but I'm so glad it is where it is. To see those lights on, especially at night when you go by and you see people in there, it's something else. There's a vibe to it.

Continued success. Get involved with the library and get involved with donating if you can to this great project because they're a little bit short on some of their fundraising and they need some help to get us over the end.

Thanks a lot for the announcement, minister.

Congratulations on the grand opening.

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

### Access PEI Queens County

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

Access PEI serves as a one-stop shop to help Islanders access government programs, services and information. As our population increases and the needs of Islanders change, so too must our service.

The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure has recently entered into a two-year agreement with the owners of Royalty Crossing to open a new Access PEI site within the mall.

Having another location for Access PEI services in Charlottetown will help reduce wait times at the Riverside Drive site and provide a better customer experience for people.

The location is ideal, as it is very accessible and located on the public transit route. We anticipate opening the second location in winter 2023.

Islanders deserve quality service and consistent experiences when interacting with government and there is an increasing demand for greater accessibility and convenience.

This pilot project will provide valuable information towards the planning and requirements for adding Access PEI locations in Queens County.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to remind everyone, Access PEI Charlottetown, located at 33 Riverside Drive, is currently open Saturdays this fall from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. to noon. We have extended this service to December 10th.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Congratulations for the new access site in Montague. I agree with the minister that it's really important that the citizens of PEI have access to, easy access to stop and shop. Congratulations to the residents in Montague who can now walk or bike to the new centre or have an easy drive.

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

**Mr. Hammarlund:** The minister mentioned that this will be a pilot. I hope the pilot will look to whether we should have these access centres in every community, in every district. For instance, I believe the access centres are a really, really important link between the government and its citizens. They should be near as many people as

possible with as little distance to get there as possible.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I guess I'm going to say that adding another access centre to our chain of access centres across PEI is a positive thing and I certainly commend the minister in that regard.

Interesting that he's put it in the riding of the member from Charlottetown Sherwood. I'm assuming with the election coming, I hope that member is not in any kind of political trouble because he's a pretty good MLA. Maybe he might have wasted a spot.

The other comment I wanted to make, too, it seems like it's great that they can make an announcement on an access centre but if they could have used some of the access centres that they had to deal with the Red Cross distribution of funds –

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

**Mr. Henderson:** – especially in West Prince, we probably would have seen some much better results and better level of customer service to Islanders in trying to at least obtain a paltry \$250.

Thanks very much.

**Speaker:** End of minister statements.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

#### Tabling of Documents

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

**Mr. McLane:** Mr. Speaker, by Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table the Report of Borrowing. This report includes all loans and advances and any defaults on payments since January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, 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 document containing social media posts from the Government of Prince Edward Island today stating how important it is for all Islanders to be able to stay home when they are sick, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Summerside-Wilmot, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Motions Other Than Government

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

**Ms. Beaton:** Mr. Speaker, I call Motion 120.

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

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, Motion 120 is currently under debate and debate was adjourned by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

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

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

It was good to get talking about this important motion condemning the response, government's response to Fiona. There was so many things and I think I had gotten into a little bit of the Dorian report.

**Mr. Henderson:** You just scratched the surface.

**Mr. McNeilly:** I just scratched the surface is right. There were so many things that we needed to do better on this and government needed to do better on this.

My colleague just mentioned talking about Access PEI sites and potentially, could that have been an option to deliver the \$250 important money that Islanders needed when

the disaster happened? But instead, it created another disaster for people going to get it. I can't imagine.

I had an 80-year-old in my district get up at 4:30 a.m. in the morning to go get in line. What do I say to her? There's nothing I can do as an MLA because they have to review her identity. I mean, she's been living in the same spot her whole entire life. There needed to be better – it needs to be done better.

You know, with that, you look at it – I'm surprised, this is, I'm surprised it's such a tragedy that *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* has not picked up on this and not said, "Oh, this is a complete disaster" and come in and done some skit here. That's what this has boiled down to because it's just, it's unbelievable.

You ask – the committees have done a great job of looking at this and asking great questions. Red Cross was in a committee. We said, what was preventing the Red Cross from delivering these services faster.

They said two things, do you want to know what they are? Two things.

They said, there was no hotel rooms for employees coming in to administer the verification process. There's no hotel rooms.

Every one of the MLAs sat there and thought to themselves, well, there had to have been a way, there had to have been a way to bring people over.

That was excuse number one. The second excuse was, we have our own special software that we use, that we can only use, so the people coming in from Prince Edward Island that can't get here to deliver the cheques, can't use the software because they're not here, and there's no place to stay and nobody to use – I know our civil service could've stepped up, I know our people at Access PEI. Have you ever seen them work a computer? It's unbelievable.

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

**Mr. McNeilly:** They could have stepped up and assisted. So, I'm not sure how this chaos happened.



And not to mention about the citizens of PEI who couldn't – who had to travel around from exhausting parts of the Island to go wait in line and then realize they couldn't get there. They couldn't get the cheque, they couldn't get verified, they'd come back some other day.

So, we're talking about condemning the government's response, and you can say the Red Cross did that. That was a government-led initiative to get out money, and you don't have a good track record of it.

It's just – it's not there.

When you ask – EMO, the director for EMO came in, and she came in to a standing committee and fielded questions for two and a half hours. She did a great job. She was there alone, she was there by herself, fielding questions from us. She did a good job.

What she said was that we were ready, but then we found out a week into it, they had to take another floor, and bring in people from all across Prince Edward Island to expand the EMO facility, and to expand the people working there.

I don't know if that was in the plan, but that's how big the disaster was and how much – were we not ready? Were we ready? I'm not sure. But she – talk, asking questions, she could've used some more support here.

Questions about 911. Questions about why that service went down.

We hear that it was always working, but it wasn't working. And it wasn't working because the connectivity problem, and then electricity. Then we have the telecommunications industry saying that they couldn't get fuel to fuel their generators because they couldn't get to the – there was no gas to be had.

So, they were waiting in line with jerry cans. Think about it.

**Mr. Henderson:** EMO's No. 1 issue.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Bell Aliant, Eastlink, Telus, they're waiting in line with jerry cans to get their generators up and operational.

I mean, how can we fail at such an immense magnitude where we couldn't understand, we needed fuel. This province does not operate in a disaster without fuel.

**Mr. Henderson:** No generators.

**Mr. McNeilly:** It's things like that, that yes, there will be learning opportunities, but Dorian, and the Calian report should have been the learning opportunity, and the scope of that report was nowhere where what we needed it to be when Dorian hit.

It just focused on internal communications of government. Government talking to government. And that's basically what it focused on. We needed to know what affected the people of Prince Edward Island. That report – I remember we waited for it, we pushed government for it, and it needed to be better.

The scope of that report needed to be better, and it wasn't.

Whatever we decide to do next time, whatever we decide to do, if it's a public inquiry, get on with it. If it's making sure IRAC looks at this – that's what I was referring to today, when I was asking questions about that, and I needed the minister responsible for IRAC to ask to see if she would execute and look at her powers under Section 32 to make sure we have as much information as possible.

Because the last thing – the committees worked hard, but we just scratched on the surface. The committee chairs and the committee members did a great job, but it's just scratching on the surface, because this is coming again.

If you weren't a little nervous by the flickering of power yesterday in Prince Edward Island, all across our Island. I'm hearing that, people got nervous during that little bit of time. Power outage and stuff for a windstorm.

**Mr. Henderson:** It was just a breeze.

**Mr. McNeilly:** We asked the professionals, are we ready for what's happening? And yes, everything's back and operational. I don't know if we're ready. I don't know if it's up and operational for this weekend. I

hope and Islanders will stick together, but have we used that time since Fiona to make sure that, hey, this is coming again, and we have to be ready.

We'll support you with a lot of tough questions and whatnot, we have to do. But we need to take every step manageable to make sure that we're taking care of Islanders.

Talked to a doctor here, a disaster management specialist, one that we're lucky to have. I've mentioned this before, Trevor Jain does this, he's worked in the military, he's an ER doctor, he's ready to go. He's talked to Nova Scotia and Nova Scotia has talked to him –

**Mr. Henderson:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. McNeilly:** – about coming over and doing disaster management for their province. Did we talk to him? Nope, we didn't talk to him.

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

**Mr. McNeilly:** We did, yeah. He sent an email, but I'm not sure that he got a response back, so check that.

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

**Mr. McNeilly:** Yeah, well, I don't know why it didn't happen then.

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

**Mr. McNeilly:** Is it there? Oh, okay.

So, these are just some things, and I'm just saying them – I'm trying to be constructive at the moment. We have to use our specialists and what we've done on the Island to make sure that we're there, looking out for Islanders.

So, something that I don't – and I did talk about – touched on yesterday – how did we take care of our seniors?

And in my district, I get upset talking about this because I've got three long-term care facilities in my district; Garden Home, Beach Grove and PE Home.

Walking into Beach Grove and talking outside to the staff, it was the look on their face that they had been abandoned. The place was – when you come into Beach Grove, you look in, and you see darkness, and you're outside and you look in and you see darkness and you know that hundreds of Island residents will not cope well with that; cannot stay in darkness for extended periods of time.

It was the look on those professional faces that I won't forget.

And, if I don't stand up and do my job – because that generator was not in, that was purchased and approved for in this Legislature. It wasn't in, and it's coming in next month, I guess it's coming in, but it was a colossal failure to buy and purchase that and get it approved in this Legislature, and then not install it, or not have it.

That's the problem with the Capital Budget, and that's why I said, special warrants need to be done all over the place. We can't wait for a Capital Budget anymore. We have to do the things for Islanders that are important. The emergency things for Islanders and do them now and that's a prime example.

Because you know what happens inside of that home? Is that people wander, and that's what we're finding out, is that people wandered during that time, during that five-day period, and they fell, and they injured themselves. Dementia patients wandered. Do you know what happens with dementia patients when the doors aren't working in their facility and in their home? They start to wander. And that's very dangerous and I can't express that enough to you.

We have a duty and responsibility to take care of our long-term care facilities first and foremost. And we have a duty and responsibility to do the same thing in our residences like Hunt Court and 501 Queen.

Forty days later, and it's raining in 501 Queen, and then we hear, "oh, it's just in the common area". I'm like it – it needed to be fixed, it needed to be looked at. These are – this is our responsibility. I'll talk about our responsibility as MLAs in here, that's us.

I'm not there as – just because it's outside of my district. We have a collective responsibility to do this. We have to do it together.

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

**Mr. McNeilly:** I know things are being done – and my heart goes out to when I was there yesterday or the day before, I can't remember, and the staff are working hard, but they're defeated. The five – my colleague asked great questions yesterday about the exhaustion level, how many do we have – they're exhausted, and now we're talking about we're going to hire more. It's a small circle of plumbers and Red Seal carpenters and are we providing them what they need to help us? We all need to say to those people, "come work for the province, we'll push the minister on making your workplace better", but we need you. The 1,600 residents across the province, we need you. It's got to be done, because they're very, very, – it's incredibly important.

You know, I don't really know if I have too much more.

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

**Mr. McNeilly:** Yeah, I know. I know.

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

**Mr. McNeilly:** Do you think? Do you want me to keep going? Do I keep going?

But this is an important motion and I'll be supporting it. I think it's a very important one because we need to do better and we don't have – the Dorian report and the Calian report that came out afterwards, we didn't do enough with it quickly enough.

**Mr. Henderson:** Didn't do anything.

**Mr. McNeilly:** We have to do better and whatever report comes out, whatever we do, we have to expedite it and make sure we're all on the same page because Island resilience is being tested right now and Islanders came to the forefront and stepped up for each other. The one problem is, government did not.

Thank you.

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

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

I think a lot of the points that I'll make today have probably already been made but they're important, nonetheless.

The Dorian report – when I was in education, we would often get a new initiative or a new way of doing something, a new curriculum or something added and it just – another binder. We used to say all the time, another binder for the shelf. Another binder for the shelf because, they just – there was no time to look at them.

So, whenever we're considering something like this – I'm saying that incorrectly here. Things that were above and beyond, things that were not really a part of what we were doing. They were something, a new initiative that didn't really complement what we were already doing. Those are the binders that we kind of put on the shelf and they would gather dust.

A Dorian report that is actually written for government to say how you can improve in the face of a natural disaster, and we let that sit there. There's more examples every day that we're in here of a recommendation that just went, not just ignored, but just wasn't even looked at. When you consider something as simple as inviting telecommunications to the EMO table, that should be a no-brainer.

We had moms with children who are on feeding tubes. We had brand new babies coming home from the hospital who weren't necessarily ready for release. We had seniors who were without any way to contact family in the event of an emergency, who were unable to keep their medications at the proper temperatures.

It was a disaster.

I often have people, whenever we're in conversations, play the devil's advocate, which I always appreciate, and they'll say, "Well, you know, this was an unprecedented storm." Yeah, we've heard that, I think, probably one too many times in here. You're right. It was the hugest storm in our history and guess what? It's not the last.

**Ms. Beaton:** Exactly.

**Ms. Bernard:** And so, it was no surprise and yet we were still completely blindsided by this. We want to sit and deny that but the proof is in the pudding. The proof is in the fact that we walked in – let me rewind.

Before the storm even hit, the first thing that came into my mind because of another storm we had, a much smaller storm here a little while ago, was do we have plans for an emergency shelter? We need time to get that out because last time we did it, we didn't have time to communicate and people didn't even know it was there. What's the point of having something if nobody knows it's there, which reminds me of another point I want to make about communications. I said I wasn't going to talk too long but really you could talk about this for a very long time.

**An Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Ms. Bernard:** I had contacted the minister and I was happy to hear, yeah, there were plans for a shelter. Wonderful. We go to visit said shelter as it's getting set up. It was all-hands-on-deck. Red Cross was there, it was coming together, which I really appreciate.

That was, I can't remember, before the storm, maybe Friday they were setting that up. On Sunday – so, the storm happened through the night Friday. Saturday we were still being asked to stay in our homes and Sunday, they were still asking people to stay off the roads.

We took a little adventure to the shelter. I had been in touch with the person running the shelter and just wanted to go, because we had no telecommunications, so I popped in with the Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere. When we got there, they were closing. Sunday at lunchtime. They had just finished the meal and they were closing. When I brought this up, I was told it's because there was a new location. Nobody knew that.

I was speaking to a man who looked very familiar to me so I went up to him to try to make the connection. It turns out I went to high school with him. He was in such severe pain living with a disability. He was brought

to tears because he said: Now I need to go get my stuff at the Community Outreach Centre. I need to figure out where I'm going to sleep tonight.

If there was another shelter planned, they were in the process of tearing this one apart, why did the people who were going to access it not even know about it?

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

**Ms. Bernard:** The simplest things. The simplest thing. You don't need that in a Dorian report to know that's just the right thing to do.

**Ms. Lund:** Right.

**Ms. Bernard:** Let's see.

Then the Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere who somehow miraculously, the odd time, could make a phone call on her phone, picked up the phone immediately to call Minister of Social Development and Housing. I was so relieved when he said, what? No, no. I didn't realize that. That was EMO's decision. That's not closing right now.

I get a bit confused, given the fact that the deputy minister and the coordinator for homeless services were there. They were there, so did they not know the minister didn't know. How did that happen? I don't get it.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Through the gaps.

**Ms. Bernard:** A lot of gaps. There were all-hands-on-deck, as well. People in housing really stepped up to do things but there's not enough of them. There's not near enough of them.

As the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty has mentioned, really, it should have been hands-on-deck when we knew the state of – I'm getting away from shelters but that's okay, I'll come back – when we knew the state of our government-owned seniors' buildings, which we knew before. We knew before the roofs were leaking. We denied it for a long time but the minister knew that this was the case. He was in, he saw them. He believed it. He knew there were no railings on the hallways where it was dark,

that the floors were wet on a dry day and this was after a hurricane.

It was not a surprise that this was the state of our publicly owned units. Yet, we didn't think to maybe redeploy staff from the department to go in and check. Yes, there were some door knocks from the staff but they weren't equipped to deal with what they found. I wasn't equipped to deal with what I found and I had supports from Charlottetown Mutual Aid. Thank goodness for Charlottetown Mutual Aid. I don't know what we would have done without them.

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

**Ms. Bernard:** To be able to knock on a door, to go around knocking on a door as an MLA at that time would have been just completely – would have felt very wrong. But to be able to go to a door, introduce yourself and say I'm volunteering with Charlottetown Mutual Aid. Are you okay? Do you need blankets? Do you need flashlights? Do you need candles? Do you need hot food? Do you need ice for your medication? Are you okay? Do you need us to call someone for you? Would you like some hot water for a nice cup of tea?

What I found on Wednesday when I went into one senior's home was that they hadn't had a meal since Friday. That gets into a whole other discussion on the need for transitional housing, which I will put to the side for now. We'll put that in the parking lot.

Back to the shelters. The shelter has moved now to the Murphy's Community Centre. Wonderful. Then all of a sudden, it's closed and people aren't sure what happened. I start getting texts at 10:00 p.m. on Saturday night or something, I think. It was on the weekend, for sure, Friday or Saturday night, that the shelter was closed. There was nowhere for people to go.

The Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere, I wasn't able to leave my kids, she hopped in her car and went to find the people that had been turned away from the shelter, because some people did know about it when they got there. They found out they were actually turning people away because it wasn't for people who were unhoused, it

was for people who were displaced from their homes.

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

**Ms. Beaton:** Splitting hairs that's –

**Ms. Lund:** That's unbelievable.

**Ms. Beaton:** – crazy.

**Ms. Bernard:** What? How did that happen? How did that happen? It is an emergency shelter. How are we picking between who gets a bed and who doesn't when the place is full of beds?

Not only that, we threw out 75 hot meals from that shelter because nobody knew about it – 75 hot meals. Do you know how many volunteers were in this community making meals for your constituents; for my constituents?

You have no idea.

**Mr. McNeilly:** No.

**Ms. Bernard:** So, they were just thrown out. Yeah.

The Red Cross debacle; I don't think that we need to go there again, but I'm going to. That was – I'm a bit speechless about that. We knew it was a huge problem right from the start. I'd like to know – I should count how many emails I've sent to the minister. If we all counted the emails that we've sent to the minister about people waiting for that \$250 from the Red Cross, I'm sure it's in the hundreds. I'm sure it is. And knew about it almost immediately yet did nothing.

Now, let me correct myself; did go to Red Cross and say, "How can we support you?" and Red Cross said that there was nothing they really needed.

Well, I'm sorry, but if you enter into an agreement with a third party and there's that many issues, just go in and support yourself. Just do it. Stand there with the cheque – start checking people off. Whatever. You knew what you needed; why didn't you just go do it?

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

**Ms. Bernard:** Hundreds of people. Many of them were not able to get to that lineup; and if they got to the lineup, were not able to stand in that lineup. This is not new to anybody. If it is, where have you been?

People were not able to do it. It seemed that the people who reached out to me, for the most part, were seniors; were people who were living in poverty, were people who needed the money the most. Not all of them, but the majority of them were.

So, if you think of how that looks for a minute; discrimination? Yeah, you bet. Human rights violation? You bet.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Absolutely.

**Ms. Bernard:** How many seniors and people living with disabilities reached out to me and said, “This is ageism. This is discrimination against people with disabilities.”?

The question on the Red Cross thing asking to identify your Indigenous community you were from, that kind of was an evolution. People in Indigenous communities have reached out to me to say, “Why did they need to know that information?” Why did they need to know that?

There were so many levels of wrong with this. Many of the people in the line were also fairly new to the province. It doesn't look good. If you look at that lineup, it doesn't look good at all and that is on you.

Gosh, what else do I want to say?

**An Hon. Member:** Lots.

**Ms. Bernard:** There is so much to say. I'm going to let others speak to this, but I will end by saying I'm sure that we've all seen the weather report this weekend. I really, truly hope that you've taken the last few weeks to dust off that old Dorian report, review the committee meetings that have happened because there are tons of lessons learned there; but you knew about them before, because we heard the truth from the committees.

So, I hope you've dusted off your Dorian reports. I can print one off for you and deliver it to your home, if you like. I hope

you review the committee meetings, and that if this happens again, we see a completely different response from this government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

It's a pleasure to rise to speak to this motion because I think it's important that the stories of our constituents are shared in this Legislature.

**An Hon. Member:** Agreed.

**Ms. Beaton:** I think it's important for all of the ministers and the members across to actually listen to us; maybe even share some of the stories of your constituents, because that would be amazing if you wanted to share a story or two. I'm sure that you had constituents that were suffering.

I'll tell you, we heard from some of your constituents as well.

**Ms. Bernard:** Yes, we did.

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

**Ms. Beaton:** I don't even – it's hard to know where to start because it's been six weeks since Fiona. I think one of the most difficult things to recognize is, people still aren't done dealing with Fiona.

**Ms. Bernard:** No.

**Ms. Beaton:** You can drive down any street and you can see a tarp on somebody's roof, you can see damage to their house, you can see the siding off their buildings, you can see structures still collapsed. Every single day there are Islanders that are still recovering from Fiona.

One thing that I recognize through this whole process is we were all in different stages of recovery. Sometimes it's hard to understand other people's perspectives when you're in a different stage of recovery, but it's important that you hear them out, and

you listen to what their experience is. That's important.

If you don't hear everybody's story, then it's pretty hard to figure out how you're going to do this better. I think, at this point in time, we need to recognize that there are definitely areas that the response has to be better next time.

I'm going to talk about a constituent that I heard from, this morning, actually. Six weeks past Fiona, and their family is full-out, still in recovery mode. They lost a lot of their roof, many shingles, all the tar paper. They experienced severe flooding in their home, to the point where now, part of the home is back to the studs and their house just isn't livable.

You think about somebody who's in that state, and then you think about all of the other factors that they have to deal with. I know everybody over there that's looking at me right now understands all those factors, don't you?

All of those things that you didn't do anything about in preparation, such as the housing crisis; such as the labour shortages. I could go on. Now, because this government, for the last three years, has done nothing about the housing shortage, people who have been displaced from their homes can't find homes while their houses are actually being repaired.

This constituent that I was speaking with this morning; they have been out of their home for six weeks. They were able to stay with a family member, but they couldn't find housing. They were literally, literally homeless, until they finally found something that they could live in, but only until January; because, I might remind you, we've got a housing crisis.

People who own their homes that have been displaced are now out there trying to find housing in such short supply, especially when they have families. We know how difficult it is to house people today. We know how difficult it is to house families, especially.

At this point in time, here, they've found a place until January. But do you know what? It's been impossible to find a contractor that

can actually do the repairs to their home. What they said is – they called probably every roofer that they possibly could find, and they're not going to get their roof repaired until the spring.

They're going to go all winter. I remind you, I said they've got a place to live until January, but what are they going to do if they can't get their roof replaced until spring? There are hundreds of people in this situation right now because the construction industry right now is already going gangbuster, that they can't keep up. You know that, yourself.

I know all those ministers looking at me right now, you know you can't even get tenders fulfilled, because construction companies are so busy right now. Our contractors are so busy.

People are still recovering from Fiona. We're not done here. We're not even close to being done until we get people back in their homes. There are a lot of things that government could have been doing over the last three years to get this rectified. When you ignore a problem, it's only going to compound, and then you're going to get yourself into a disaster because you're going to see an unknown.

This was an unprecedented storm, but it wasn't unpredicted. You put yourselves and Islanders in this situation.

If you were watching the weather last night, you would have seen that they were calling for high winds. If you were in this House and you were watching the Maritime Electric website, you would have seen that 12,000 Islanders, at one point, were out of power.

This is going to be something that's going to consistently happen throughout the next few months, especially throughout the winter. Have you given any thought to the triggers; what that's going to do to Islanders?

I'll share another story of a constituent. I spent the first four days after Fiona at the warming centre at the Town of Stratford. A huge shout-out to the staff at the Town of Stratford for what they were able to accomplish.

Everybody, on Monday, showed up at 8:00 a.m. ready to work, every single one of them, not knowing what they were going to be confronted with once they got out on the trails and throughout the community. But every single one of them were there, prepared to do the job, regardless if it was in their job description or not. They were ready.

I can tell you, we served so much tea and coffee. They were out on the trails right away just trying to make some paths. They were trying to make sure that the pumping stations kept on running so that residents still had their sewer. It was just, it was unbelievable, the response that they were able to do.

There was a lot of stories that I heard when I was in the warming centre. I'm just glad that there was a place for everybody to go. On the Monday after Fiona, they had 1,500 people in that warming centre. They weren't able to provide food at the warming centre.

The Lions knew that they were going to lose some of the pies that they made the week before so they went in with 80 pies and they donated it to the people that were at the warming station that day.

No Frills, my goodness, what would we have done without No Frills? Unfortunately, they were the very last grocery store in the province to get their power back. They donated over \$50,000 worth of food – over \$50,000. Instead of throwing it in the garbage, they recognized the needs of their community and the O'Connors, they donated as much as they possibly could. It was astounding to watch them set up tables in front of the Town of Stratford and feed so many residents.

But there was no hot meals at the Town of Stratford. One of the challenges is the School Food Program rents out the kitchen. They have a sole use lease. So, even though there's a commercial kitchen at the location, it wasn't until Tuesday and Wednesday that there was hot meals served because they don't actually have access to that kitchen because it's leased out. Definitely, there's some things that can be improved there. If you've got School Food Programs that are using commercial kitchens that are in municipalities, fire them up, right, so that we

can serve meals to everybody.

I spoke to one senior who took that bowl of pasta on the first day. He said this is the first hot food that I've had in the belly since the storm hit, the night before the storm. We have to recognize that not everybody could be prepared for the storm like others. There's going to be people that we need, we absolutely need to be supporting.

I joined Charlottetown-Victoria Park to one of the public housing for seniors, which is deplorable, by the way. My daughter and I had gone the night before, I think it was, and we were delivering care packages because, you know, they had a shortage of even toilet paper. Like, just the bare necessities to get them through until they were able to get out and about and actually be able to purchase that kind of stuff on their own. There were necessities that they absolutely needed so, my daughter and I went and we delivered care packages thanks to Charlottetown Mutual Aid.

My daughter is 13 years old. She walked in that building and she knew the way that we were treating seniors in our public housing was deplorable. She's 13. We've got ministers who have ignored this for years but yet our youth knows that it's wrong and would absolutely do something about it.

That night, I was there when the power went out, when the generator lost its fuel. All of a sudden, the hallways were dark. I had some of the senior residents come out with their little tiny flashlights.

**Ms. Bernard:** Thank goodness they had those.

**Ms. Beaton:** Thank goodness.

**Mr. Henderson:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Beaton:** Anyway, they came out with the little tiny flashlight so that they could show me where I was going in the hallway because it was pitch black. I couldn't believe it was pitch black. You know when you're in a tunnel, like a culvert. If you're looking down the end of a culvert and you see a little circle at the end, I kid you not, that's what seniors were looking down every time that they walked out their doors.



I can't believe that our government, that the folks sitting in this room, were okay with that situation. I can't believe it.

The seniors that were helping us get door to door were so concerned, because we had packages for people with diabetes, they were so concerned and they were walking us down showing us which door we needed to drop which package off.

The seniors were looking after themselves. There were many people within the community that were also trying to help them, but they were deserted by their landlord.

Let's talk about the Red Cross. I'd appreciate if you listened up for this one because when my colleagues talk about discrimination and human rights complaints, let me explain to you the situation you put seniors in.

I was with a senior who has two bionic knees, as he would describe them, and a bad hip and can barely get around with a cane. That gentleman has lived in his home for 56 years, but guess what, Mr. Speaker? He had to go prove who he was. He was whispering this in the room with me and there was several other people in the room. I said it's difficult. I don't understand what the holdup is.

A gentleman said the holdup is, is because everybody and their dog in each household in applying for the 250. They're even putting it under their dog's name. If that's who you're trying to catch – he said that right in front of the senior that I was sitting with who was appalled that he was in that category and how that gentleman was speaking about him.

He's lived in his home for 56 years. He couldn't go stand in a lineup for God know how many hours with his two bad knees and his bad hip. He's lived in his house for 56 years. How did he get on your list?

**Ms. Bernard:** Yeah. Shame.

**Ms. Beaton:** How on earth did you do your list? We heard from Red Cross that when you offered to help that they started sending you batches of names and then you would cross-check them with whatever. We heard

at one point that it was with property records. What are you telling people who are tenants? What are you telling people who don't own their own home? You're telling them that only property owners matter?

I'm pretty sure that we could go back to absentee landowners and all that kind of stuff and all that history for PEI and we can talk about why we still have so many problems in our society. It's because this government is the exact same as governments before who have not actually changed their way of thinking.

Mr. Speaker, we have to change our way of thinking.

We have to treat people with the dignity and the respect that they deserve. We should not have asked people to stand in lineups for hours and hours and hours in order to identify themselves and to justify that they deserved that \$250. If somebody stood in the lineup for six hours, you best be sure that they needed that \$250.

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

**Ms. Beaton:** I'm a little worked up, I'm not going to lie. I can't believe that we put people in this situation.

I got my power back on day eight. I'll tell you this, on day seven, I lost it. I live in a rural community. I don't have sewer and water. I remember a person that I know who was in a very different stage of recovery than I was. I moved my mom in with me because I knew my mom wouldn't be able to go that long without being able to have power. I knew she couldn't. So, fortunately, she's somebody who could move it with somebody. We all came together in my home because I have a propane cook top and, let's be honest, I can make do. But there was a lot of people out there that couldn't.

Some of those stories – I'll share another story with you of a senior who, the night of the storm, was terrified and ran down to her basement. She forgot to take any blankets, she forgot to take pillows, she forgot to take a coat. She laid on her cold, wet, concrete floor the entire night and she was traumatized. On the Saturday after, she came into the warming centre at the Town of

Stratford and she was still shaking uncontrollably. She is somebody who has been traumatized by this storm.

Here's my question: How come we didn't have a critical response team come in to deal with that trauma?

If you have a mass shooting, for instance, then you immediately bring people in to deal with the trauma that people would have experienced. If you have a death in a school, you bring grief counsellors in so that they can work through that trauma.

We have people that have gone through a storm that they've never experienced before in their lives, where trees were falling down on their houses and they were trapped in their basements and we never even thought about how we would provide them any kind of trauma counselling.

So, now every time that we hear another storm is coming, like we hear on Saturday another storm is coming, they're dealing with those triggers.

It is an important service that we should have been providing, that was completely missed in this response, because we have to recognize that when people are in that situation, we have to help them through it.

Samaritan's Purse is in my district; they've set up at the Cornerstone Baptist Church on Shakespeare. I took time on – I guess two weeks after the storm – to sit down and find out about how they do the response, because they had helped many people in my district.

They were here during Dorian and they had set their headquarters up in Summerside and they stayed for, I think it was almost a year afterwards. They were there for a long time, helping residents recover from Dorian.

We know at this point in time that Dorian was a much milder storm; it wasn't as fierce as Fiona was.

Some of the numbers that they gave me – they had said that in Fiona, for the whole storm, they had, I believe it was 190 people who had filled out applications and received support from them – received help. That day when I was in there, they were at 369 – 369 people.

**An Hon. Member:** It's now at 540.

**Ms. Beaton:** It's now at 540?

**An Hon. Member:** Yeah, I was there today.

**Ms. Beaton:** That is devastating for people. So, one of my constituents, she had so many trees down, she's in her 70s, she absolutely couldn't have removed the trees on her own. They came in, the only thing that they asked her for was the use of her washroom, and if they could provide a meal to the volunteers that were doing it. I can tell you, the first time I saw her after the storm and after the cleanup was done, the weight lifted off of her shoulders was immense. That's because Samaritan's Purse took that weight off of her shoulders.

So, I have to say, huge, huge shout-out to Samaritan's Purse and everybody there. One of the things that we talked about was the trauma that people were experiencing, and she said to me, "Don't kid yourself. PEI was a disaster zone. A disaster zone." And as Islanders, we just kept on going.

We got to the next day, and we said, "How do I survive today?" We got to the next day; how do we survive the next day. That's how we did it as Islanders, but we did not recognize the outside eye coming in, has looked at – has been in other situations that was a complete disaster zone.

And you know, recognizing that, and hearing Samaritan's Purse and how they bring counselling services with them whenever they go to a disaster. I think that's a learning for the government whenever we do a response for any kind of natural disaster or a storm, or any disaster, that we actually consider what that does to a person's mental health.

Because we're going to be dealing with this as we move on.

There is still a lot to be done, and we have a lot of winter storms coming up, and we've talked to several people in different standing committees, and I will tell you, that there is certainly things that we have learned, that the Dorian report said that you should do this, this, and this for the next storm. Well, this government had three years in order to

put those things in place, and they didn't. They didn't do it.

We heard that they implemented a bunch of the recommendations, but it doesn't necessarily show.

I come from a small, rural municipality, and I'll be honest, the emergency response for them, the mayor will tell you, completely failed. When you develop an emergency response, especially when you're a smaller community, you almost don't think that you're ever going to need it, but then you actually do need it. So, there's also support that the smaller, rural municipalities should probably receive when it comes around this, as well, so that they're more ready and prepared.

There's a lot in that report that we need to ensure and hold government accountable to ensure that they implement it. And in this motion, they're calling for – we're calling for a public inquiry.

I'll tell you why we're calling for a public inquiry. It might take a long time, but this is not the last time that we're going to receive – that we're going to be hit by this kind of storm, and we're going to have to be prepared for bigger ones, because the likelihood of it to come, is very likely.

Nobody should ever say, "I can't imagine that a bigger one won't come," or, "I can't imagine all the power on the Island will go out."

There's a lot that needs to be done in order to figure out how we best ready ourselves for the next storm to come.

A public inquiry would allow these stories from across the province to come out.

So, I think, when we have – if this government would actually put forward a public inquiry, it would be in the best interest of all Islanders so that we can actually ensure that we close any of the gaps that were out there; we find a better way to give supports, financial supports to Islanders.

You guys have – this government has not figured that out yet.

How do you roll out supports in a very quick fashion, where you don't treat people like they're a second class citizen, and that they have to prove who they are, because we should never, ever do that?

There's a lot of things that would come out in a public inquiry, I'm sure, because it allows for people to be called in in order to give evidence and that kind of thing.

There's a lot of things that we can do with a public inquiry, and a lot of things that we can find out. From this public inquiry, I think it would put us in a better place, and I think that that's what all Islanders want us to do.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on, but I won't, and I will close my remarks there, and I appreciate the time to be able to speak to this motion.

**Speaker:** Hon. members, I have exhausted my list, did I miss anyone?

I'll go back to the mover of the motion, the closed debate, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The Member from Mermaid-Stratford said towards the end of her comments there that she was a little worked up, and when I look back to every single member who spoke to this – and sadly nobody from government felt it important enough to stand up and either speak to the motion or defend the actions of government – but every single person on this side of the House who stood up, was a little worked up.

We were a little worked up because we've been channeling the emotions of the thousands of Islanders that we have spoken to over the last six weeks.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Islanders who are feeling sad, who are feeling confused, who are feeling frustrated, who are feeling angry, and are very aware that much of their sadness and anger and confusion is because government

bungled this. And they bungled it enormously.

How many more times are we going to – when we have a stiff breeze as we did last night – end up with 10,000 Islanders without power. How long is that going to go on?

We have to learn, we're here to learn, individually, and government is here to learn as an entity to listen, to have humility, to listen to concerns that are brought forward to you, to be open to change, and most importantly, to implement the change that you are told about, and the Dorian report provided this government with all of the information it required to do that, and you ignored it.

In Fiona, in our dreadful misfortune that was Fiona, we were incredibly lucky, because afterwards, we had good weather, and we were able to deal with this. That's not going to be the case next time. We must learn, and the only way that we can do that, the only way that we can gather all of the information that we require is to have a full, public inquiry, as this motion calls for.

I will conclude my remarks there and call for the vote that asks that this be a standing division.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** Hon. members, a standing vote.

I'll call on the Sergeant-at-Arms to ring the bell.

[The bells were rung]

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

**Ms. Altass:** The opposition is ready for the vote.

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, the third party is ready for the vote.

**Mr. Bell:** Mr. Speaker, government is ready for the vote.

**Speaker:** Hon. members, those voting against the motion, please stand.

**Clerk:** The hon. Minister of Finance, the hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities, the hon. Member from Morell-Donagh, the hon. Deputy Premier, the hon. Premier, the hon. Member from Stratford-Keppoch, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Winsloe, the hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, the hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture, the hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, and the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Speaker:** Hon. members, those voting for the motion, please stand.

**Ms. Bernard:** (Indistinct) doesn't care about transparency (Indistinct)

**Clerk:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, the hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness, the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, and the hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

**Speaker:** Hon. members, your motion is defeated.

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

#### Orders Other Than Government

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

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

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness, that the 35<sup>th</sup> order of the day be now read.

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

**Clerk:** Order No. 35, *Election Signage Act*, Bill No. 127, ordered for second reading.

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

**Mr. Perry:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from O'Leary-Inverness, that the said bill be now read a second time.

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

**Clerk:** *Election Signage Act*, Bill No. 127, read a second time.

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

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

**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 *Election Signage Act*, Bill No. 127.

Hon. member, you have a stranger?

**Mr. Perry:** Absolutely.

**Chair:** Perfect. There has been a request to bring a stranger onto the floor.

Shall it be granted? Granted.

**Mr. Henderson:** Think about it.

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Bring him on.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Standing vote.

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

**Chair:** Welcome, stranger.

Could you say your name and your title for Hansard please?

**Colton Profitt:** Colton Profitt, Director of Legislative Affairs for the third party office.

**Chair:** Thank you. Welcome, Colton.

First of all, promoter, would you like to give an overview of your bill, please?

**Mr. Perry:** Sure. Thank you very much, Chair.

This legislation aims to modernize the way we use election signage in our provincial elections. The bill provides limitations on both the number and the placements of signage during an election period. The spirit behind this bill is to address growing concerns around both the environmental impact and public safety issues with our historical use of election signage.

This bill will be the first of its kind for provincial jurisdictions and could make PEI a leader in addressing these long-standing concerns.

**Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, promoter.

Do we want the bill read clause by clause, section by section, or open it up to general questions?

**An Hon. Member:** General questions.

**Chair:** General questions. Thank you very much.

I'm going to start populating my list. Are there any members who have any questions on this act?

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

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

Hi, Colton, first of all. Good to see you.

I'm wondering how you foresee this act being enforced.

**Mr. Perry:** You want me to take that, or do you want it?

Let's put Colton right to work right away.

**Ms. Bernard:** I can be a bit more specific, there. When we're talking about the 50 election signs, how do you see that being enforced?

**Colton Profitt:** That's a great question. Through our conversations with Elections PEI as part of our consultation process, is that this would be enforced the same way as all complaints during an election period are enforced, through Health PEI. It's through a complaint-based system.

There's not going to be any policing of the number of signs, per se, but the enforcement would be around a complaint-based system in that if a complaint is made, and they are able to substantiate that complaint, that it would then be investigated.

**Chair:** Thank you very much for your response.

I know it seems a little bit different, but just so it's a little bit easier for Hansard, if you could just respond to the question – maybe take the odd look over every now and then, but –

**Colton Profitt:** Sure, yeah.

**Chair:** That would be great. Thank you, Colton.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

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

I'm wondering what Elections PEI had to say. Did they have anything to say about how they would enforce this, or their ability to enforce that?

**Colton Profitt:** They never gave any indication on whether this would pose a greater challenge to them; that that was already, as it relates to any other complaint that goes towards Elections PEI. They never gave any indication on if that would be a problem or not. They did seem that it would just follow the same process as it does with any other complaint that's brought forward.

**Ms. Bernard:** We had heard that they felt there was not really a way that they could

enforce it, so we're kind of wondering, if we're not able to enforce something, then why would we put it in legislation?

**Colton Profitt:** Yeah, that's certainly surprising. I don't think we got –

**Mr. Perry:** No. The same enforcement would apply as the legislation already stands now for signs that are placed, let's say, prior to the writ being dropped, or a certain amount of days after the election. The same would apply.

In conversations with the office, Elections PEI, statistically, there might have been, maybe, on average, one official complaint per election over the past – in memory – official.

We were at the presentation. I know you weren't.

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

**Chair:** (Indistinct) has the floor.

**Mr. Perry:** It's up to each individual candidate to have a little bit of integrity, too, to police their own and up to each district to police their own. If an official complaint comes in, then it's up to their office to go out and do an investigation on it.

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

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

I can certainly see the oversized signs. I guess I just, as I consider thinking about those 50 little lawn signs, they're on people's individual properties. I just think that that's a lot to ask of – it just seems like a lot.

**Mr. Perry:** I absolutely understand where you're coming, I do. It is something that would be difficult to police with 27 different districts across Prince Edward Island with 50 signs allowed, even though those signs could be either stay in one place for the whole campaign or they could be moved around, which makes it, again, more difficult to count because some people – during the election times, you could have – they will take notice of that. They will try to find, depending on what stripe they're with,

they may try to find any way to try to bring attention negatively to the opposing candidate, let's say, so I could see complaints coming in.

That was a question asked on multiple, I guess, conversations we've had with Elections PEI and it's hard to predict what may or may not be called into their office.

**Ms. Bernard:** I get where you're coming from and I also understand all of the waste and all of that that comes from it. I guess when I think of the bigger signs, that's what I think of. When I think of the smaller signs, I kind of think that's a person's way to engage.

And so, I'm imagining having to tell someone, "I'd love to put your sign in my yard," and to say, "I'm sorry. I only have 50 signs, you're cut off," sort of thing. Have you given any thought to that?

**Mr. Perry:** Absolutely. I think every candidate can manage that. I'll go over my past experience in three elections. I would not have 50 people coming to me wanting yard signs to put in their yard. Most times, it's the – and this is right across Prince Edward Island – most times, it's up to the campaign team that are out searching for people, I shouldn't say searching, but asking residents if they would like to have a yard sign put up in their yard to support that particular candidate.

But the option is there to move those signs around. If they want to show their support, you can put the sign up and say, yes, you can have it for two weeks and then we're going to move it around and it would come back to you or what have you.

But somewhere, there has to be a number. I don't know what that magical number is. If it was up to me, to be quite honest, originally, I wanted to have no signage.

It's 2022. I think there's other means of getting our message out, getting our party's message out, and to get our face out there without having to have signs – and I said it many times before – on the side of the road where there could be 50 to 70 signs at an intersection. They're all fighting for position. They're over the curb, onto the road. They're in the middle of roundabouts.

I really wanted to do something about the public safety part of it but also about the environmental part of it because now, we're not back in 1980. We have other ways of, like I said, getting our message out there through social media and such.

I think the 50 signs would be easily managed by each campaign to address that, if anyone is interested. I think everyone would have that opportunity or can have that opportunity to have a sign to show their support for an individual candidate.

**Colton Proffitt:** Hon. member, if I could add, I would just say that in response to that, we kind of need to look at what we're trying to do with this legislation here. What we're trying to do is mitigate the environmental impact that is caused by election signage. While it incorporates having people – while typically, we look at lawn signage, for example during elections as a way for people to engage with the process, you need to look at how many other ways are there for people to engage during an election period.

Is a lawn sign an historical way that people engage during an election period with your campaign? Yes, but are there other ways? Can they provide another form of volunteering to your campaign? Can they share your messaging on social media that you're putting out?

I think it comes back to looking at the spirit of the bill and the spirit of the bill being that, what the member is trying to accomplish, being environmental sustainability, mitigating our impact, that legislators can take upon themselves and their own responsibility in what they're able to do for this specific part to help our environment, and in weighing that pro and con and opening up about what else we can do to engage with the political process during an election period, rather than putting a sign on the lawn.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, I'll go with one more question, if that's all right.

**Ms. Bernard:** Can I have two?

**Chair:** You can have two, yes.

**Ms. Bernard:** Okay, and they I'll stop.

I agree 100%. I think that I would certainly not be opposed to limiting – I would say no signs in public property. But for me, I'm curious now, have you looked into what the environmental impacts of signs are, out of curiosity?

**Colton Proffitt:** Yes, we did. There is not – I'll be honest in saying that there wasn't a lot in terms of studies or projects that have happened to track and look into this specific thing.

But one specific example that we did find is in 2017 in British Columbia, they ran a campaign that would collect soft plastic and the corrugated plastic of election signage following a provincial election in one of their ridings which, for perspective, did offer a population size of about 148,000. That campaign, they were able to collect 1,000 pounds of signage and be able to divert that from landfills.

Subsequently, in the region of York in Ontario between 2006 and 2015 – for reference, their population is just over 1.1 million – and they had a similar campaign that started back in 2006. That initially, through that campaign, it was 4,080 kilograms of election signage were diverted to be recycled. That was to – this saw a 250% increase in election sign and waste from a similar campaign – I got my notes mixed up there.

But basically, the summary of that is that they've diverted around 20 tons of signage from landfills in that region of York since 2006.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, your last question.

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

I'm having a really hard time. This is not an environmental bill in my mind. This is more to do – where my concern lies is that this is a bill that is going to have unintended consequences, perhaps, on people who – we were talking earlier about people engaging on social media. There's other ways to engage but we're leaving out a whole group of people and that's seniors, let's say.

Some seniors, many seniors that I've run into don't use the internet, not all of them. There's many who do, too, don't get me wrong. But there is a large group of people who don't have access to the internet and, so, I'm wondering, did you consider what change this – what impact this change may have on people like seniors or others who don't use social media?

**Colton Proffitt:** I think, hon. member, you need to look at what benefit election signage is providing us currently. If you look at – take the most recent municipal elections, for example, and you see that voter turnout was down in Charlottetown, lowest turnout in decades in Charlottetown and across the province. If you look at the voter turnout in the last provincial election compared to the 2015 election, we need to look at what benefit is it providing. Right now, the benefit is not voter turnout for election signage. So, there are lots of other mediums and ways, like radio, TV advertisements, and I think it also puts a little bit of onus on the candidates to get out there and make their face known, make their platform known.

So, I think it comes down to – we can argue back and forth whether this is an environmental bill or not. The point is, this will have a positive impact on the environment regardless of how you want to look at it, and that I just think there are so many other ways of engaging and advertising that could be utilized that would certainly be tailored toward the seniors population or whatever other population you'd want to pinpoint.

**Mr. Perry:** Two things; one is the – I'm really surprised that a member of your party would actually say this doesn't have an environmental component to it. A huge, huge component of putting this bill forward, was the impact that it has on the environment and the waste of these signs. I could drive almost down any back road and I bet you I could find signage from 20 years ago somewhere in the ditch or in the field.

So, it does have an impact on this. Where does that waste go afterwards?

That affects the environment. That was part of the reason why, one of the facets as to why I put this bill forward. It's 2022; we



have different ways of getting our message out. You're just saying that senior citizens who may not have access to Facebook, well, they do have, still, with this legislation as I'm putting forward, have access to a yard sign if you choose to give them one.

**Chair:** Okay, thank you, promoter.

Next, I'm going to move to O'Leary-Inverness.

**Mr. Henderson:** Thanks.

Yeah, just on the comment to add to the issue of, is it environmental or not, I mean, I know the reality; I've ran a number of campaigns. I can remember one time, somebody found – there was about, I don't know, five or six of them were thrown over the Grand River bridge. I think it was a disgruntled constituent or something.

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

**Mr. Henderson:** They did find them later on.

**Mr. MacEwen:** (Indistinct) mail (Indistinct)

**Mr. Henderson:** Yeah.

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Yeah, might have been a bad, overzealous postmistress, maybe.

Anyway, but one issue I do have, you're saying 50 lawn signs as such and about five non-standard signs. So, they're a little larger signs.

One of the issues that I tend to be a fan of is for your boundaries within your riding. Once again, some ridings are very small; some are very large. In my case, I've got a fairly large riding with a lot of multiple points, and we share with Alberton-Bloomfield a fair bit and Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

I'm just wondering, how did you come with the number of five, and is five a fair number, or would it better to have said you can only put them on your boundary lines as you enter or leave a particular district?

**Mr. Perry:** That's a great question. Again, it goes back to what number is right. What number is right? Again, I would prefer zero. I really, really would prefer zero, but I think that's taking away a candidates' ability to advertise. I think it's taking away – I guess the smaller signs, taking away, again, a constituent's right to display their preference on their own property.

So, five was a number; when I looked – I spoke to a few MLAs about what larger signs they had in the past elections, and the average came out to about five larger signs. Now, I know my district in particular is more of a pie shape and up at the end of the Island, so I can only go one way.

But to address the intersection signs too, when you go into an area – I think at one time, I'm not sure, it might have changed the last boundary change, but out on the bypass where KFC is there, there was four districts came into one.

**Mr. Henderson:** Yeah.

**Mr. Perry:** It can get very confusing too with the signage there, trying to figure out whose is what, whatever. So, there was a request – not a – well, yeah, (Indistinct) a request brought forward whenever the electoral boundary changed prior to the last election: "We're going across the province to ask for input." And this was something that I know I advocated for. I'm sure you advocated for it too, to clearly identify roads so that you wouldn't have two on each side.

**Mr. Henderson:** Yeah, not split a road, that's right.

**Mr. Perry:** So, they would know specifically who their candidate was, because I had many roads, or communities that were split in half, small communities and roads.

So, I think five is a number that can be easily displayed and give good coverage in all districts right across Prince Edward Island.

**Mr. Henderson:** Yeah, I guess what I would – if I looked at my district, what I would probably do, knowing that I have 50 lawn signs, I probably wouldn't put many of them in lawns. I would take them and put

them at my riding boundaries spots as well. I just would have liked maybe a little better mix there where I could have a few more larger signs and a few less of the others.

But I think one of the things you're doing, at least it's fair in that regard.

Is there anything in here that speaks about – I don't want to say the age of the signs, but I have a candidate that runs against – in the riding quite frequently, and he's got quite a collection of signs. They tend to be a lot older and the pictures aren't even accurate and things of that nature.

Is there anything in this legislation that means that there has to be some sense of accuracy to the signs, if they're current, or anything of that nature?

**Mr. Perry:** Well, I'm just trying to find right here where it is.

Basically, what they're asking for is that all the signs should be marked and having been approved by the candidate's official agent within the meaning of the *Election Act*.

So, you could go back and say, well, these were approved, let's say, because they could have been, in 2011. So, what this is saying is basically you can only put up – if this goes through, right now, the way I presented it is that there's a certain number and it applies to the numbers, and that each sign, regardless of the size, as long as it fits into the sizes that are in here, they have to be approved by that candidate's official agent.

**Mr. Henderson:** So, basically, then, if they have signs from previous elections, they still can only have the 55 total.

**Mr. Perry:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Henderson:** Okay, I appreciate that, Chair.

I think that's all for now.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

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

First of all, I don't see this as an environmental bill at all. I can assure you that every stake, screw, two-by-four, or piece of sign that I used in my election got either saved or reused, so there's no environmental issue at all, as far as I'm concerned.

But I had a couple of questions about the actual bill.

Why, under definition "election sign", do you not cover signs on bus stops or on buses, for instance? I would hate to see suddenly everybody's face on all the public transportation around town.

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you for the question.

Again, I'm just taken back that you're saying signage has nothing to do with the environment whenever, for years and years, you go down roads well after the elections and there are these corrugated plastic signs in the ditch or in the woods somewhere that are blown about. It blows my mind that you're saying there is not an environmental component to this bill. So, I cannot understand where you're coming from with that.

The second part of it, the election sign, why is it not in here saying that they cannot wrap a bus stop with it or wrap a vehicle with it, is, we are not going to stop small businesses from making an income. This bill is not to try to stop small businesses from doing any kind of work during a campaign. Right now, it's tough times for small businesses especially, or any kind of business on Prince Edward Island, and that could happen at any time. So, we do not want to be any kind of impediment to their sustainability and viability.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** So, small businesses like Mike Cassidy, for instance?

I have another question on election signs under two, election signs, paragraph one.

It says: "Subject to subsection (2) ..."

I imagine you mean and subsection (3) as well? They're both signs that are allowed?

**Chair:** I'm sorry, hon. member. What was your question?

**Mr. Hammarlund:** If you look at paragraph two, election signs –

**Chair:** Yeah.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** – under paragraph one, it says: “Subject to subsection (2) ...”

I assume that you want to include paragraph three as well; otherwise, campaigning headquarter office signs would not be allowed.

**Mr. Perry:** Hon. member, so this was a – originally, we had it that it included three, but it was a concern brought to us during the consultation process by your party, that would allow headquarters to be placed outside of the candidates’ district boundaries.

Listening to the concerns that your caucus had, we put that in there, which allows headquarters to be outside of a candidate’s electoral boundaries, because sometimes – especially in urban areas, it’s difficult to find office space to rent, or what have you. So in all fairness, this gives each candidate an ability to clearly identify their election headquarters campaign office.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** Well, I don’t have any more questions, but you don’t really answer my concern.

It says in subparagraph 1 that no election signs should be any bigger than four square feet, unless it’s subparagraph 2, but campaign headquarter sign is bigger than four square feet, so maybe I’m just reading it wrong, but anyway.

I don’t have any more questions.

**Mr. Perry:** So, basically, what this is saying here, is that you can have up to 50 signs that are under four square feet – so basically that would be your average yard sign size that you would put up. The 32 square would be basically a four-by-eight sheet of plywood, so that would apply to those five signs and also to the headquarter signs up to that size.

**Chair:** Thank you promoter.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, you’re good?

**Mr. Hammarlund:** I’m good for now.

**Chair:** Okay, thank you.

The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

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

A lot of the questions that have been asked are basically ones I had as well. I guess around the rural and urban districts, some districts are quite larger than others – sorry, can you not hear me over the – my voice doesn’t really carry.

Some districts aren’t quite – I guess different size districts, mines – like the five, four-by-eights in my district would probably suffice. I’m just thinking of all the different road entrances in would probably work, but perhaps O’Leary-Inverness, or Morell-Donagh – there’s a number of large rural districts. I guess.

I know the member did ask, how did you come up with five, but – how can we make it fair for everyone, I guess, if you have a large rural district or if you’re in an urban district in the city.

**Mr. Perry:** That’s a fair question, again, and I think that it goes to – how to find that fair number for everyone, and I don’t think there is such a number.

If we put 100 signs, somebody would want 105, if we put two, they’d want five. Five was a number, again going back to some consultation with individuals involved in past elections, we’re looking at the geographical map, there are some districts. And I understand that O’Leary-Inverness is like that. The old one, Georgetown, St. Peter’s Bay I think, as it was prior to the last election. That was a very – it covered a lot of area.

So, is there a magic number? No. But I thought five would be a number that could fit into each district that would allow each candidate the ability to promote themselves. Basically, that’s how the number came out.

**Mr. Deagle:** I won’t get into – I’m not going to try to nitpick everything. I’ll be honest, I don’t support the bill, and I don’t – I guess I just want to say that I think it’s

hard – impossible to enforce. If it's hard to put a number on it, why are we putting a number on it.

But I actually do believe that we should have signs, so I'm not – I know you can say "well let's go to zero then and just not have them" but I actually do think we should have them because I think it helps the incumbent quite a bit.

If there was no signs in my district, it would help me because I would assume I would probably have more name recognition than who I was running against just by virtue of being in the media constantly and whatnot, over a number of years, sometimes too much.

So, I guess those are my points. I don't necessarily think it's, we're going to save the environment by passing this bill. My neighbour kept all of – he was in charge of my signs, and he kept all of them, and he repurposed all of the wood and kept a lot of the chloroplast as well and used it for different things. He's a very innovative gentleman, so he – patched my roof, quite a few trees on my house.

Anyways, I won't drag it on, but I just don't support the bill, and those are the reasons why. So, I just wanted to be on record to say it and to be honest with the member of why I don't.

**Chair:** Thank you, minister.

Would you like to respond, promoter?

**Mr. Perry:** Sure. I'm assuming that the person you gave them to was probably a supporter.

The number of signs – again, it goes back to, what is that magical number? What number – you didn't give me – I gave an opportunity to you and to all the members of this House, to sit down, to have a consultation regarding this bill, and just like I did with the official opposition, they came to me, they had three concerns. I listened, and I put all of them into this bill.

I want it work, I want it to be a collaborative effort to doing this, because it affects all of us in this room. So, there was an opportunity there to come back and say "no, I don't

think this is going to work for me, and this is why."

Policing, – it's the same right now. There is provincial legislation in place right now that prohibits election signs within a certain distance of polling stations. Also, about when they can go up, and for how long they can go up. It's policed. These number of signs can also be policed the exact same way.

**Colton Proffitt:** Might I add, too, just in response to the minister's comment about favouring the incumbent, not that I think that I'm going to swing your vote by this comment, but there was research completed around favouring – if election signage favours the incumbent – and that was actually inconclusive. So, the only benefit that the election signage that we saw with election signage, was for people who used and did not use it. That was the only conclusive evidence around it. So, in terms of favouring the incumbent, that part of the study that was done in 2016 by Columbia University was inconclusive, but they did test for that.

**Chair:** Thank you, Colton.

The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you hon. member.

First off, I'd like to start by thanking you for taking the bill as well as all your staff that have put the work into it.

Obviously, there's a lot of work happens behind the scenes, when it comes to putting any piece of legislation together.

Where my concern is at, and I guess a couple questions, I'm more the enforcement side.

So, let's say we have a candidate run in the election and decides not to follow the legislation and puts out 200 signs. What's the process on something like that?

How are the policed on what takes place, I guess is what I'm –

**Colton Proffitt:** Yeah, similar to what I mentioned before was that there will be no policing, per Secretariat, done by Elections PEI. It would be handled the same way that every complaint that goes into Elections PEI during an election period is handled. So, that could be whether it – if it was you that put out the 200 signs instead of the 50, then it could be a concerned citizen that understands the legislation, it could be your opponent that would submit a complaint into Elections PEI and then, if Elections PEI deems that that complaint has merit, or whatever internal process they have to determine that, they would then investigate it after the complaint is made. Similar to all complaints within Elections PEI, is that they operate on a complaint-based system and not on a policing-based system.

**Mr. Perry:** I just want to add – sorry –

**Chair:** No, by all means, go ahead (Indistinct)

**Mr. Perry:** I do want to thank you for bringing that up about the staff. A lot of times that's not mentioned in here, but the work that the staff does to prepare a bill that we come and promote on the floor of the house – that extends more than just the staff within our own caucus offices. It goes into those that have done the research.

We've put some questions out to the Legislative Assembly research staff, and they come back – the work that they do is unbelievable. So, I really want to appreciate the fact that you brought that up, and also show my appreciation, to not only my staff, and everyone's staff, but also to those in the Legislative Assembly who do the research and help us prepare.

Actually, I'd like to give Neil a shout-out, too, for preparing, on multiple occasions, a new draft, and this final bill that we're presenting today.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

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

I guess where my big concern is at is the enforcement side. I'm going to give you an

example. If we have somebody running in an election and decide not to follow the rules and put 200 signs out, there's really not much that's going to happen during the election.

We saw last election, 2019, hon. member, that your party as well as the official opposition went against the signage act during the election, which, the election was in May, but nothing happened until the first or second week of October. Five months had gone by and the damage was already done.

Here's my concern. If we have an individual who goes out and runs in an election, puts 200 signs up, helps them win the election; they might be charged under the act, but nothing's going to happen until after the election's over and months go by.

That's kind of where my concern is at. I just know from an example last election, myself, I was very frustrated because when the signs started going up in my own district, the writ wasn't dropped. So, here I am, not allowed to put signs up. There's an act in place that does not allow to put the signs up, but they went up anyway, and there was no consequence.

That's where I'm at. I'm in support of the legislation as a whole. I do think there probably is an environmental aspect to it; anything we can do to improve. I agree with that, but my thing is if there was something that was able to be issued immediately – but that's not the way in the past it's been done.

Like I say, we've seen elections are long and gone and over, and yes, the individuals will be charged, but by then, it's too late. I'm just wondering your thoughts on that.

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you.

That brings attention to, probably, a greater issue here and something that this bill does not legislate. This bill has no legislation on policing. That would have to be through Elections PEI and how they – I shouldn't say policing – how they handle the complaint process and how they determine whether someone had went against one of the pieces of legislation that's already there.

Basically, what it is – it would be up to Elections PEI to determine all of what those concerns are, not this legislation.

**Colton Profitt:** You can make that argument for anything that goes wrong within an election period, would be my rebuttal to that. It's not so much of how it relates to this bill or for signage in general. It could be any form of advertising that goes on during an election period, and how Elections PEI handles that.

Like the hon. member mentioned, it speaks to a greater issue that we can't really begin to tackle in this bill. What we're trying to do in this bill is to – whether it's a small part or a big part – to help the environment. It addresses it, it helps it, and it addresses public safety concerns. Outside of that, we can't really control much else.

Your concerns are valid, but it speaks to a greater issue within the Elections PEI complaint process, in my opinion.

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

**Mr. MacKay:** Hope not.

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

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

**Mr. MacKay:** You rattled me there, for a minute.

My last question, or comment; have you looked at – and I do think there's a lot of merit to what you're saying with the signs. I think, at the end of the day, if we're looking at an environmental lens here, too; as a running member of an election, I feel it's my responsibility to make sure I clean up the signs and so forth.

Have you ever looked at, instead of – I guess with the amount of signs, looking at it as the candidate and having rules in place that the candidate's responsible for their signs. If not, possibly being charged for not being accountable for it.

I'm just thinking that the very first thing we do after an election; we go up and clean the signs out, but we've seen signs that – I agree

with you, hon. member that, especially, I've seen in the federal election – that sit in ditches, or just don't get picked up because the ridings are so big.

Is there any appetite, or any look, at holding individual candidates accountable in the legislation?

**Colton Profitt:** I think it's almost implied that that's what should already be happening, would be my first thought. It's a valid point; however, again, it doesn't line up with what the intent of the bill is. The intent of the bill is to reduce the amount of signage and reduce the concerns that come around with signage placement and as it relates to public safety.

Again, it's a valid point. I would say it probably should already be assumed that a candidate would be responsible for their own signs. Is it legislated anywhere? It's not something I know off the top of my head. However, another valid point, but again, I guess I would argue that it's a separate issue; within the same topic, but not with what we're trying to accomplish here.

**Mr. Perry:** I will agree with that. It's a separate issue that doesn't pertain to the context of what the intent of this bill is for.

Again, it goes into – I know, every election, there are signs that are missing, people are ripping signs out, whether it's public or on private property, and they're discarding them somewhere else.

It would be hard again to, as a candidate, for me, to try to control what I put out and bring back in; would be very difficult.

But really, what I wanted to do with this bill – and it's been on my mind for a while – was again, just from past experience from being out and about during elections, whether it's federal or provincial; the safety part of it.

I get to an intersection and I'm reading signs and I'm doing (Indistinct) that are distracting. I talked about them being in the middle of a roundabout. The environmental part of it, it is a huge part of this, but it's only a part of it. It's one of the facets as to why I brought this forward.

As I said right from the start, the bill is probably the first of its kind for any jurisdiction in Canada. We have an opportunity to be leaders here. Instead of doing the same old, same old, same old, we have different ways that we can get our message out; to make ourselves known.

Each one of us probably have some of the smallest number of candidates anywhere in Canada. I talk to colleagues from other jurisdictions that have tens of thousands of candidates.

**An Hon. Member:** Constituents.

**Mr. Perry:** Sorry, of constituents. Yes.

We have a large number of – I shouldn't say I know everyone in my district, but I would probably know 95% of the people in my district, and they would know myself. We know everyone, to be quite honest.

It was mentioned in the House a few days ago, "You know who lived there before," I think the Member from O'Leary-Inverness was saying that. Their grandparents, and the history of their grandparents, and all that.

We have a unique opportunity here, because of the smallness, that we know people. I think we have an opportunity to make a change, and we don't have to be doing the same old, same old, just because.

**Chair:** Thank you, promoter.

We are pretty much at the time to switch over to government. I still have members on our list, so we will move over to government's time.

**Mr. Perry:** Good job, Colton.

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.

Thank you, Colton.

**Colton Profitt:** Thanks.

**An Hon. Member:** Great job on your first (Indistinct)

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

**Chair:** Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having under consideration a bill to be intituled the *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.

Orders of the Day (Government)

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

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

I move, seconded by the Member from Morell-Donagh, that the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 Public Safety.

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

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Morell-Donagh, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration grant of capital supply to His Majesty.

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

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

**Chair (Perry):** The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to further consider the grant of capital supply to His Majesty.

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

Shall it be granted? Granted.

Hon. members, we left off on page 19, Capital Expenditure, Health PEI. The

section, equipment, has been read and is currently under debate.

Please state your name and position for Hansard.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Gordon MacFadyen, Executive Director, Fiscal Management.

**Chair:** Welcome back, Gordon.

On my list, I have the hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

**Ms. Beaton:** Thanks, Chair. Thanks for joining us again today, Gordon.

We are on Health PEI, I believe. I asked a number of questions around Health PEI yesterday. I'm going to pick up where I left off, if I could.

We're on the equipment section. I had asked around that if you had a definition as to what government pays for versus what's left for the foundation to fundraise for. I'm just wondering if you have any update on that.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I don't have anything today. I hope to have it perhaps, maybe, the next time I come if I'm invited back another time.

**Ms. Beaton:** I'm sure we could accommodate that.

Can you tell me, there's \$12 million budgeted for equipment – can you run me through what is on that list?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I think in the handout provided, there is a summary, for sure, of the high-level large item purchases plan.

**Ms. Beaton:** Can you tell me if there are items that were requested that did not make it into the Capital Budget from Health PEI?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I don't have a reconciliation of the total request versus the total ask, but generally, in this area, we take the lead from Health PEI as to what's needed in the upcoming year and the years to come. That would be with the provision that, obviously, if there's small and unplanned purchases that they, sometimes, would get towards the top of the list and

cash flow of the items that were in the plan sometimes would vary.

I think, noted in the handout provided, is an example. It's not an exhaustive list. It's not an accounting by any stretch of the imagination as the, all of the equipment, but some of the examples of the significant pieces that are procured for its system.

**Ms. Beaton:** Okay. Do you have a breakdown of where all of the – oh, at the top there, I guess that breaks down which hospital it is. That's what the breakdown is?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Yes.

**Ms. Beaton:** Does it include any items such as for oxygen or dialysis? I know that we've had some requests for increase in dialysis services in different hospitals. Can you tell me if there's anything budgeted for that?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Within this particular, I think there's a couple of replacement chairs for backups for sites that are existing now. I'm not aware that there are any new equipment to expand the service per se, but we're just coming off a renewal of the equipment for the dialysis program, for sure. I don't have any information on oxygen concentrators or anything like that.

**Ms. Beaton:** All right. Around, so, cataract eyes – there's a huge wait list for people to get cataract eye surgery here in the province.

Were there any requests from a capital perspective or is it needed from a capital perspective in order to reduce that wait time? Are you familiar with anything around that?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Not precisely aware. I know that the physicians that are involved are fee-for-service physicians. They do some of the work at the hospital and some in clinic settings. For a fee-for-service doctor in a clinic setting, that equipment would be their responsibility. But as far as the hospital-based services, there's no updates in this Budget for the hospital-based equipment.

**Ms. Beaton:** Okay. Just so I'm clear, was the entire budget for equipment approved for



Health PEI, or was there any reductions from what their initial request was?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** The Capital Budget process is very much an iterate process. There often is, not saying needs and wants, but we're always looking at the overall envelope and working with every entity, Health PEI included, to ensure that they have the equipment, buildings and other capital needs that are required in any given year.

It is an annual process that gets updated annually. Over the five-year plan, things do change, but I couldn't say for sure whether they got absolutely everything. I'd have to go back and look at the original submission. We were working with, definitely, Health PEI to get them the equipment that they identified.

**Ms. Beaton:** One of the things that I'm interested in is the Budget process for Health PEI. There was a request that came from the CEO to have control over the Health PEI Budget. Currently, if there's expenditure over \$100,000, they would have to come back to Treasury Board in order to get approval to move forward.

I'm assuming, Gordon, would I be correct in saying that if Health PEI decided that any piece of equipment here, that they wanted to go with another piece of equipment because of need or demand, they would still have to come back to Treasury Board in order to get that approval? Is that still the process?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Treasury Board has been working with Health PEI to look at their workload and the information needs and the approval process. We have provided them with some; I don't have the limits right off the top of my head here, but some changes to that limit.

The way the equipment generally is structured, the big projects, as laid out in the Budget and presented in the information provided to you, would be those project-based items that they would be coming to us for, "us" as in Treasury Board. When we get into the smaller-scale equipment purchases for the day-to-day running of the hospital, it's very much within the direction of the hospital and the system itself.

But cumulatively, if it gets above a threshold for a particular procurement, Treasury Board authority would be required to award that tender, yes.

**Chair:** Hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford, I'll give you one more question. I'll put you back on the list, if you so choose.

**Ms. Beaton:** Oh, yeah, definitely. Put me on the bottom of the list, yeah.

**Chair:** Sure. Okay, the hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

**Ms. Beaton:** I'm going to, I guess, dig into that a little bit more, Gordon, if you don't mind.

Health PEI has been given the authority to run health care here in this province. Can you tell me why it's still a requirement for – essentially, Treasury Board is ministers, right – to have that approval over what Health PEI does with that budget when they are the authority that has been allocated and legislated to take care of health care in this province?

Why do ministers still need to weigh in?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** That's a good question. I believe that, within the financial management responsibilities of Treasury Board, if you look through the FAA, Treasury Board is responsible for financial management within the Province of PEI, and within that overall framework of financial responsibility, there have been thresholds set for delegating some of that authority out to entities like Health PEI. They're not the only ones. All entities would fall under the same umbrella of the FAA. So, there has been a certain level selected for authority that has been delegated, and that's what they're using currently.

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

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

As I go through some of these Capital Estimates there, I can't even find the word Community Hospital O'Leary. Is it in here anywhere? Is there even a plug nickel for it? Or is it that new and in that good of shape?

Okay, anyway, I don't see it there, but anyway, my question is, and I know the minister, he might want to do an intervention on this, but the minister and I met with the Community Hospital foundation not too awfully long ago and they had a couple of issues that were paramount. One was an ambulance depot and storage capacity within the hospital. They're having quite a challenge in that site, as far as overcrowdedness; not from the patients, but for the delivery of service.

I see nothing on this, and as I recall, the minister was very eloquent in giving them an indication that something might be coming on that.

Maybe either you or an intervention would be appreciated.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** There's no project for an ambulance depot in this particular Capital Budget.

**Mr. Henderson:** Okay.

**Mr. Hudson:** (Indistinct) intervention, please.

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

**Mr. Hudson:** Yes, thanks, and the hon. member is certainly correct, that we have had discussions on this in the past, as well as with the foundation.

What I am told, member, is that late in the summer/early fall of this year, there were discussions between the Town of O'Leary and Island EMS and that the next steps are for the town to send a potential design – or a potential design to be sent to the town. And if I recall correctly as well, the foundation in O'Leary also had funds earmarked on that, member.

**Chair:** Okay, hon. member, I just want to bring it to your attention, I think, just to make sure that we're under the section equipment, and the next one, capital improvements, will take in renovations or any kind of construction.

The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

**Mr. Henderson:** Okay, well, maybe my section is a little more on the capital improvements more so than this, so I'll hold off then.

**Mr. Hudson:** That's fine.

**Chair:** Okay. Back to the hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford. Others on my list, but I guess you're going to go back up pretty quick.

**Ms. Beaton:** I'm up. I'm ready and raring.

Okay, so, I don't actually have a lot more questions on the Capital Budget, but just on that process, I had just a follow-up question on that process.

When you referenced, though, FAA and the entities that were within that, there are entities that are completely outside of the FAA that government doesn't actually approve capital purchases and that kind of that thing because they control their budget.

I'm just wondering why Health PEI is different and why that is not downloaded onto the board, for the accountability and oversight of the board. Why do we blur those lines between Health PEI, the board, and Executive Council?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Yeah, I'm not sure which entity you're referring to that's outside the FAA. I think of many entities that would be in the schedules A, B, and C; all fall within the parameters of the FAA and would be treated equally, the same as Health PEI.

**Ms. Beaton:** So, does that mean that any government entity – for instance, Island Waste Management or the Liquor Commission, they actually have to go to Treasury Board whenever they need to do approvals?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Yes.

**Ms. Beaton:** Oh, that's interesting. Okay. I think that's all my questions under equipment.

Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** Shall this section carry? Carried.

### Capital Improvements

“Appropriations provided for capital improvements.” Construction and Renovations: 33,932,600. Capital Repairs: 3,500,000.

Total Capital Improvements: 37,432,600

The hon. Member from O’Leary-Inverness.

**Mr. Henderson:** Yeah, to get back a little more on that, on the storage issues. It’s great to talk about the ambulance depot at Community Hospital O’Leary, but they have a bigger issue, and that’s the storage of a number of the equipment and devices and the services that they’re providing.

My other issue is the issue around the parking lot. I’m assuming that’s a capital improvement. But Community Hospital O’Leary was the place for COVID testing and it was also one of the health centre locations. In the spring of the year, the parking lot got in pretty bad shape.

I’m just wondering, are there funds included in this Budget for either of those two projects, storage or parking?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Specifically, that would be into the large buckets. There is an overall repair and maintenance budget for Health PEI that they do the administration of and the – what’s the word I’m looking for – what are the most areas of need within the system. There was an enhancement to that overall budget for health facilities in this Capital Budget, so I would say that if that need is on that list and it’s at the top, then it’ll get done, but I don’t have any information. They’d be developing those particular needs over the next coming months and weeks, whereas the current Budget would be addressing some of them based on the one that was passed last year.

**Mr. Henderson:** This is what we always run into with the parking lot issue at the hospital, is that we don’t know whether it’s transportation, we don’t know whether it’s Health PEI, or whether it’s the foundation’s responsibility, or whose. But I guess I want to make the point, and I’ll once again maybe look for an intervention from the minister, but O’Leary was a designated location. There was a lot of heavy trucks, a lot of stuff

that was coming in for people getting their testing, getting their COVID needles and whatnot. So, it had an extra bunch of activity, and it did deteriorate a parking lot that was a bit vulnerable.

I guess I’m not sure if (Indistinct) it is falling under the Capital Budget, but it does need to be looked at, or at least brought up to standard.

So, maybe I’ll ask the minister for an intervention on that as an update.

**Mr. Hudson:** Absolutely; intervention?

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

**Mr. Hudson:** Thank you.

Yes, to the point that the hon. member has raised, whether it’s a transportation or whether it’s Health PEI, reading between the lines, I think probably when he was health minister, that maybe struggled just a little bit with that same gray area at that point in time too.

But as he knows, there were improvements that were carried out to the driveway, the parking area going into the Margaret Stewart Ellis Home here; would have been probably about a year ago. To be completely upfront, I have not been into the parking lot there in the area that the member is speaking about, but it was my understanding that there was to be not a complete recapping up it but that there were to be repairs made there.

Now, I’ll have to go back and check, member, to see if those have been carried out or not, but certainly will do that. As soon as I have that information, I will get back to you.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from O’Leary-Inverness.

**Mr. Henderson:** Okay, I appreciate that update. Like I say, to my knowledge, the potholes and the repairs haven’t been done as of yet.

I guess I’m just saying, generally, I’m a little disappointed, I guess, that there’s not going to be some activity of dealing with some of the storage issues that they have at the

Community Hospital in O'Leary, and I would encourage the minister to try to get it on the capital budget for next time round, if he can at all.

I'd say no further questions at this point, Chair.

**Chair:** Okay, thank you.

The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

**Ms. Beaton:** Thanks, Chair.

Chair, I'm just going to ask for a little bit indulgence here, I missed a couple questions on – I didn't realize that the IT infrastructure was going to be with that other section, and I had questions around the IT issues for the gynecological services and the referrals and whether there was any capital that was going to be going towards the EMR system at the hospital, and I'm wondering if you would let me go back and just ask those questions because there are constituents that were really concerned about that.

**Chair:** Okay, memory serves me correct, I think that question was asked. I'm not sure, maybe I – I thought it was asked actually yesterday. But this section was carried, you know what I mean? But I will give you that opportunity to ask, as long as the questions are kept to a minimum, please.

**Ms. Beaton:** Yeah, sure, no –

**Chair:** This section, I just want to make sure that everybody – this section has already carried.

**Ms. Beaton:** Yeah, and I was just wondering if any of the money for the IT system modernization is going towards connecting the EMR system to the existing systems.

My concern is when we are implementing new systems, and there are bugs in it, how do we identify that those bugs are not leaving people behind? I mean, when you deal with IT, you're never going to get it right the first time. There are always additional versions and upgrades that you need to do, so I'm just wondering, how are we ensuring that those systems are talking to each other so that people like with the gynecological referrals don't get missed?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Yeah, I think we did cover this the last time I was here, and you'd asked a question which I have a question out to see if there are other jurisdictions that are running Telus Health EMR and Cerner, the hospital-based systems. That question is still out there.

With respect to this particular Budget, in the estimate column there, they would have had a Cerner module for a PowerChart in the maternity area. They had a hybrid system where they were running partial electronic records and partial paper-based records, and there was some risk identified in duplicating and some oversight areas, so they did implement that portion of the Cerner, the PowerChart for maternity.

Related to the specific issue that was in the news, I think it was addressed that there were some COVID upgrades, that they weren't getting – the right referrals weren't getting diverted to the right place, and they went back through that and we're addressing it.

Again, as you'd identified, I have a question out to get answered on the first piece there.

**Ms. Beaton:** Okay, I appreciate that, and thank you, Chair, for letting me go back.

In my experience implementing IT systems, it's always beneficial to have a controlled environment that you introduce them into first so that you make sure that those issues don't happen, and I'm just – my final question on this section, and I know it's passed, but do we have that controlled environment where tests can be run when you put in a certain number of records before you throw in all of the records?

Does that happen within our Health PEI system and our department of health?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** You're testing me back to the time I served at the department of health, but there is definitely trial periods and duplicate periods where they're running both systems in parallel before turning it on, per se. They want to make sure that it is working as they expect it to work, so there are test scenarios and parallel runs that are done.

I know there's risk in any system when you have an upgrade, that there's testing that is required as well, so there is a robust suite. There's a whole team that's involved with the Cerner application that are looking at each and every module for that hospital-based system.

**Ms. Beaton:** Okay. Now we'll move on to capital construction renovations.

**Chair:** Sure.

**Ms. Beaton:** I really appreciate you allowing me to ask those couple questions. Thank you.

**Chair:** You're welcome.

**Ms. Beaton:** I do have a question for the overall forecast. So, 2022-2023 was estimated to be at 30 million, and it looks like 19 million spent.

Can you tell me what happened to those projects?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I think there's a pretty robust accounting there on the handout that is provided, so I'd just be reading some of the things that were planned but maybe didn't necessarily have the timing that was thought at the time of the capital budget last year.

**Ms. Beaton:** Were there instances where tenders went out and we didn't get responses to them, so we weren't able to proceed? Is that any –

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Not for this area. It would be more along the lines of the planning required wasn't completed on time, and the project was just not at tender-ready stage. It becomes as much a cash flow issue, and definitely, if the money's been not spent, it's planning to be spent into the future.

**Ms. Beaton:** When you don't have the capacity in order to do the work in the current year that it had planned, that has impacts, obviously. It's going to impact whether you can deliver a service on time or not.

I will ask something that is not included in this list, but I'm wondering about the

funding for the PEI school of medicine, and that \$44 million special warrant that went through. That's not something that we've been able to ask questions on because it's not in this Capital Budget; it was passed in a different way through special warrant.

Does that follow here? Is that something I can ask questions on?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** The relationship with UPEI is such that UPEI is building the buildings, and they're going to own the buildings.

The funding from government is a grant to UPEI through an annual amount that would support the expansion of facilities and programming out there. It'll show up in the operating budget when it comes around.

**Ms. Beaton:** Interesting. Okay, so the \$44 million that went out was operating budget, or was that capital?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** It will definitely be future operating budgets as the annual allotment to UPEI will go up over time for the introduction for that service.

**Ms. Beaton:** Okay. I asked the minister today if he had seen a business case on the school of medicine. I didn't get an answer, minister, and I don't know if you'd like to share with me if you've received a business case on the school of medicine.

Really, I'm not asking to be adversarial; I'm asking for good governance. I would just wonder if you've seen one and if that's something that you can share with Islanders.

**Mr. McLane:** Oh, gosh. I mean, again, in my limited role, I think that is something that the minister of health would be in his purvey. Again, I don't think there's a question of need. I think we all understand that. So, again, I would probably defer that entire – the premise of whether it's needed or not, I think the short answer would be yes, for sure, so I'm also excited about the capacity of the clinic that they're going to produce there, of 10,000 visits a year.

I don't know how we'd place a value on 10,000 clinical visits on PEI and what the value is on that, so, then again, I would really defer to the minister of health on the

merits of the school of medicine, but 25,000 on the patient list, I think a lot of the numbers speak for themselves.

**Ms. Beaton:** I'm not actually asking for a debate on the merits. I'm just asking if you have received a business case, and that's going to lead me into the question of: Have you received business cases on any of this funding that's in your Capital Budget? Because this is the Capital Budget of the Minister of Finance. It is the Minister of Finance that, you know, is responsible to ensure that the taxpayers' dollars are being spent as efficiently as possible, and so I wonder – that's simply all I'm asking for because I would (Indistinct) anybody who has ever asked government for money, it comes with a business case. That's all I'm asking for.

**Mr. McLane:** I mean, again, I think our role as – I always say the recorder and the reporter of the financial – we do lean to the departments to serve their mandates and so on and so forth.

Again, yes, we compile the Budget to the best of our abilities, but at the end of the day, the management plans, the operating plans, and the mandates come from the departments, so again, back to we are the reporter, we are the recorder of the financial impacts, but again, that's what each individual department and minister is responsible for.

**Ms. Beaton:** That almost sounds like a rubber stamp to me. There's accountability through Treasury Board to ensure that money is being spent the way that it was said that it was going to be spent.

Is there a role of oversight at all in the Department of Finance with this Capital Budget to ensure that the money is being spent the way that it's supposed to be spent?

**Mr. McLane:** Again, even back to the role of Treasury Board, that's what Treasury Board does, as a group, is manage the expenses. That would be the short answer. I think it's functioned quite well, and it's functioned that way for a long time.

**Ms. Beaton:** I'm just going to ask a straight-up question. Have you seen a business case for the medical school of UPEI? As a

finance minister approving \$44 million, have you seen that business case?

**Mr. McLane:** Again, back to the departments, we lean on the departments to drive their mandates, and so on and so forth. We don't see a business case for every single request that we get on the Capital Budget.

**Ms. Beaton:** Did you ask the minister if he saw a business case on the request for the money?

**Mr. McLane:** Pardon me? I'm sorry. Sorry.

**Ms. Beaton:** Thanks, and I'm not trying to be difficult –

**Mr. McLane:** No, no. (Indistinct)

**Ms. Beaton:** – it's just – it's \$44 million.

**Mr. McLane:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Beaton:** There's a lot of expectation that this is going to resolve a lot of the issues that we have with our doctor shortages, but there has to be a level of accountability and oversight with this. Has the minister of health – he was willing to do an intervention – has the minister of health seen a business plan on the UPEI School of Business?

**Chair:** An intervention from the Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Hudson:** Thank you.

I think, going back to the stranger's point that was brought up, we are dealing here, Chair, with the Capital Budget. It was made clear that the funding is under operating, so – and I do appreciate, and I'm not trying to be confrontational, either.

**An Hon. Member:** Then answer the question.

**Mr. Hudson:** But I think that we have to stick to what is in front of us here on the presentation that is being made by the Minister of Finance and the stranger.

**Chair:** Thank you very much for that, minister.

At times, as Chair, I don't know all the little details. So, if there is something – I can see them reaching for, at times, some members can reach for it. I can see why they ask questions, but I'm not always sure on whether it falls under capital or operations. There's a line where it can cross.

Thank you for that clarity.

Hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford, do you have a question going to a different direction, please?

**Ms. Beaton:** The women's wellness centre expansion at the PCH Ambulatory Care for \$34,000; what could be purchased for \$34,000 of capital there, and is that all the money that anybody's ever asked for?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** No. To be fair, again, this is a little bit of an accounting of the projects that have been in the capital budget as well. That would be the actual tail end of a project that had appeared a number of years in a row.

That would just be the last kind of finishing touches or hold-backs or small pieces; deficiencies that need to be done during the commissioning, and it just fell past the March 31<sup>st</sup> deadline. We have to put a line in the sand. So, it's not – it was a much larger project than 34,000, for sure.

**Ms. Beaton:** Okay. So, the \$33 million, as we can see from last year, that was underspent by about \$10 million. How certain are you that all of that money can be spent in the upcoming year, in this fiscal year?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Given that we're six months from the start of the fiscal year, it is definitely our best estimate at this point in time, as with any budget, not knowing what the future will bring. By the time we get to the end of '24, we'll have a better idea, for sure, what we will have spent.

What I would say, based on the projects that have been put forward at any point in time, this is what the department – in this case, Health PEI's best estimate at their ability to get the projects moving, cash-flowed, and under construction.

**Ms. Beaton:** I guess, again, last year we were underspent by \$10 million and there's always that probability. You put forward with a really positive outlook of what you're going to be able to accomplish.

When you do your fall fiscal update, does that cover off capital as well, or is that just where you stand from an operating perspective?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Generally, the fall fiscal update will capture the overall number that's in this book. So, we do capture what the planned spend is for the current fiscal year in the fall fiscal update, but the best presentation of the forecast for capital is contained in this document.

**Chair:** Hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford, I'm just going to give you one more, and then we're going to move over. Again, I can put you on the bottom of the list.

**Ms. Beaton:** I'm going to get you just to put me on the bottom of the list because my next question is going to open a whole kettle of worms.

**Chair:** Do you want to wait?

**Ms. Beaton:** I will ask that – yeah, I'll wait.

**Chair:** Okay, perfect.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West  
Royalty.

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

I want to know, kind of, what is here. Basically, what I'm thinking about is access. The government just announced the primary care clinics three weeks ago, but they had already been operational for six weeks. I didn't know about them, nobody in my district knew about them, but they were apparently open in Charlottetown and Summerside.

Was there a capital expense to those, and where are these clinics?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I'm not aware of the location of them. For sure, it would be in the forecast if there were any capital

requirements for the opening of those particular sites.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Those were set up because apparently Maple wasn't working. That's what I'm hearing. It's not getting all the needs. So, I'm just trying to figure out – maybe I'll ask an intervention for the minister. Where are these two primary clinics?

I know they're taking up to 10 or 11 people a day. So, there were no capital expenses? We don't know –

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Not that I'm aware of.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Is there funding in here – because I didn't see it. People want access. This is all – this is great. We're working on this long term. Is there any funding in here to create, or going towards just basic walk-in clinics where you can get access to service any time of the day?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Yeah, there's definitely two aspects to the walk-in clinics. There's a very large leased space component as well that would appear in Health PEI and department of transportation's operating budget.

The reason I say Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, they hold the leases for government. With Health PEI, they would be looking to secure space as required for clinics. This Budget here would be those buildings that we're proposing to build and/or significantly renovate.

**Mr. McNeilly:** So, I'll have to think about waiting for that for transportation?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** No. Again, the majority of the space that would be used by clinics is, indeed, leased space throughout PEI, so that's an operating matter.

**Mr. McNeilly:** When we look at the community health centre and hospital space, 3.8 million; the community health centre, 3.8. Are we going to have the community health centre open before – what happens if the rest of the project gets delayed? Is that going to be standing there, ready to go, before that?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Which community health centre are you referring to?

**Mr. McNeilly:** Well, the community health centre and hospital space, it says: impact of medical school.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** My understanding of that particular project is two-fold. As the medical students are getting through their program, they will require some extra space to expand clinics to see additional patients.

There was an amount of funding requested to fit up some of the, perhaps, enhanced lease space that will be required. They don't quite – haven't identified the exact locations because that model as to where the students will end up putting their time in, if you want to call it that, hasn't been determined yet because they don't have any students yet.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Yeah, that's going to be like basically a functional training centre.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Enhancing clinic space to allow for additional patients and resources.

**Mr. McNeilly:** I just want to, before, if I have time, just to move over to the emergency power generators. The 2022-2023 budget, there was 1.49 million. Was one of those generators the generator for Beach Grove Home?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Just going to check the same notes that you have there. I know they were – I'll have to see if I have a few more details around (Indistinct) for where those particular units were deployed.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Yeah, because that's important because I know that it was approved, or I'm hoping that it was. In this, I'd like as much information as I can on the Beach Grove Home generator that was not installed before Fiona and will be installed in two weeks.

The ventilation upgrades at Beach Grove Home, what is the breakdown of that? That's a good project. Wait, I think I might have it, actually; Beach Grove Home, full ventilation system. I know the ventilation upgrades are \$2.9 million across the board. What's the allocation for Beach Grove Home and the time for that project?



**Gordon MacFadyen:** I'll have to get the specifics on the timing of it. I know ventilation is kind of twofold. Sometimes you think, absolutely, of cooling, but dehumidification is also important. I think it would be a combination of some cooling and definitely dehumidification.

**Mr. McNeilly:** But on the next line, it says long-term care cooling project, 3.6 million. It has them both side by side, so it has ventilation and then cooling, and then Beach Grove is on there, too.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Yeah, it's a combination of both, for sure.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Okay, they'd both be in that.

If you could just bring that back to me – when, timeframe, and when that's going to be installed – that would be fantastic, Gordon.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Yes.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Okay, thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** You're welcome.

Time to take the lid off. The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

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

**Ms. Beaton:** Thank you. It might not be as exciting for some people.

We have a lot of capital spend here on our community health centres; some more so than others.

But I'm going to ask the Minister of Finance: Do you have business cases on all of these medical homes?

By asking that, I get asked constantly when those medical homes are going to start taking on additional patients rather than just the current panel that the physicians have today. I would expect that to be answered in a business case.

Question to the Minister of Finance: Do you have a business case on all of those medical

homes, including the five that are already up and running?

**Mr. McLane:** The Department of Finance's role is not to determine where the CECs go. Basically, our responsibility is to ensure that the project is costed correctly and so on and so forth. We don't determine where the CECs are located. We rely on the department. Our responsibility is to ensure that the project is costed correctly and can be delivered in the timeframe that they asked or are requesting to get. We don't make those determinations.

**Ms. Beaton:** Just to clarify, I wasn't asking where they were going. I was asking how they would be operating, and if you are allocating tens of millions of dollars and this is how we're supposed to solve our health care system, where is the business case so that you can show Islanders with numbers and accountability? "This is what we are going to be using the money for and this is how it's going to impact Islanders." A business case would tell you that.

**Mr. McNeilly:** (Indistinct)

**An Hon. Member:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. McLane:** Again, we do rely on the department in order to deliver this stuff. Do we ROI every single request that we get? Again, in Treasury Board, I think we would vet all those requests as a board and as a group. Then back in the finance perspective, again, we do (Indistinct) report of the recorders. We're not the health care experts. I don't even know if we'd be in the position to evaluate appropriate – certain investments for sure, especially on the health care file. We would rely on the experts in that department to follow their recommendations. Obviously, that's what they're structured to do.

**Ms. Beaton:** I'm sure that the minister has possibly written a business case or two, working for an NGO, and would recognize that government never hands out money to any NGO or community organization or anything like that if there's not a very extensive business case and business model that surrounds it.

I have to ask, if it's not the minister who is accountable for the finances in Prince Edward Island, who is accountable for it?

No answer?

**Mr. McLane:** I mean – no, no, no –

**Ms. Beaton:** So, I'll ask a question then –

**Mr. McLane:** No, I do have an answer.

**Ms. Beaton:** Okay.

**Mr. McLane:** And again, those policy-type decisions, again, are made at the Cabinet level, obviously in conjunction with Treasury Board. Again, it doesn't fall solely on the lap of Department of Finance to direct every decision and policy and structure of government.

Obviously, again, go back to our function. We are the reporters and recorders of the financial data, ensure that it's correct, and that we ensure that the departments are making those requests that are reasonable and deliverable.

**Ms. Beaton:** Who identifies the outcomes and then who ensures that we're measuring to those outcomes?

**Mr. McLane:** Again, the smart answer, I guess, would be the electorate, but I won't say that – but again –

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

**Mr. McLane:** Yeah, I just did but –

**Ms. Beaton:** Then you would have to give them a business case so they can hold them accountable.

**Mr. McLane:** But again, I don't think we do a review on the capital side a year or two in and go back to any department, and say, "Gosh, we didn't think that that generator was correct," or so on and so forth. That's not our role in this whole process.

**Ms. Beaton:** A couple of things there.

The electorate cannot hold anybody accountable if you won't actually put the numbers in their hands. That's the biggest challenge that I'm hearing from this.

I've been asked, I'm sure other people have been asked, that when are these medical homes going to take on additional Islanders? Is that even in the plan? I can't answer that.

So, I would ask – a business case would tell you when they're going to take on additional patients if that is part of the plan.

Is that part of the plan? We're resting all of the cure of the health care system on these, so I'm wondering if you can actually provide a business case on it.

Is there an intervention from a minister?

**Chair:** Promoter has the floor. Sorry, the hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. McLane:** I mean, again, on the Capital Budget side, our role is to ensure that we allocate the funds to build the structures and so on and so forth. I think you would agree, the human resource component of the health care system is not included in the Capital Budget. So, again, it's our role to provide assets and so on so that the system can use them.

**Ms. Beaton:** I'm not asking for the human resource aspect of it and I'm actually not even asking for the policies behind this, like the policy decisions behind it.

I'm just simply asking for the nuts and bolts of, whenever you allocate money to a certain project, that there should be something that came to you to justify those numbers. If you don't have those numbers to back up decisions, then who do we hold accountable?

That's the frustrating part of it because there is \$37 million allocated in this Budget.

We've got five that are up and running, and I'm wondering if anybody is even measuring whether it's achieving what it was intended to achieve in the first place. We spent a lot of capital on those initial five sites. I'm just asking, are we on the right path right now? And the numbers, if you are actually following results-based management, identifying outcomes, and measuring to those outcomes, then you would be able to tell me that the first five have alleviated the pressures and how it's done that, because now you're allocating some million dollars

to medical homes, but are we on the right path?

If we are, that's great, but I think we need to see the numbers in order to be able to have certain statements on that.

**An Hon. Member:** Hear, hear!

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Yeah, we're in a very heady topic here, for sure.

**Ms. Beaton:** It's a big Budget.

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Absolutely, it's a big Budget.

I could speak a little bit, I guess, to the evolution of the capital budget. We do request from all the departments and entities their needs over the next multi-year period to try to address exactly what you're talking about; sometimes replacing, sometimes enhancing, sometimes modifying, the capital structures that are required for the provision of government services.

Coupled with that is, definitely as the minister had indicated, the human resource requirements, which do come through the operating budget, and I would argue probably the most important part of service delivery is having the right and sufficient operating resources or human resources available to fill these particular structures.

Health PEI has been to us with this list of capital that believes that will meet the needs over the short term, the one- to two- to three-year period. As you see, the Capital Budget is not as robust in years four and five, so they're not putting all their eggs in one basket; they're trying to ensure that they can deliver on the things that are in the shorter-term window with a look to the future in years to come.

**Ms. Beaton:** So, I find this conversation challenging. I'm sure, Gordon, you do too. And I completely understand that. It's not like I'm coming out of left field because I have been asking for this kind of documentation to follow up on any kind of budget ever since I took my seat here.

I'm in support of medical homes. I was the critic for finance when we submitted our first request for capital to this current

government, and medical homes were in it. We requested it back in 2019 that funding be allocated to this because evidence shows that medical homes are the way of the future, and that is what all of the experts in the medical field would tell you.

But we still have to have accountability that when we spend pockets of money, in the vicinity of \$44 million – or, you know, when I look here at the Summerside community health centre, we all know it requires a community health centre, but you have to be able to, as a government, be held accountable to that spend of \$15 million.

That's just what the job is of the Department of Finance. That's why the picture of the Minister of Finance is him holding his Capital Budget, because he defends the Capital Budget and he's responsible for pulling it all together.

I think at the end of the day, we're desperately missing some governance documents to ensure that we have a plan, we're allocating enough money to that plan, and that – because who's to say that it's more than \$15 million? But if you don't have a business plan, it's hard to defend it, and that's where I'm challenged.

I know I might be droning on about this, but I ask about it in every single budget, for more documentation, more governance, more structure around how we tell taxpayers we're going to be spending their money, and that information never gets provided, and I know it's because we budget prior to – we do that work, but I'm not so sure that that is how budgeting should work in the first place.

I believe that if you're going to invest in something, you should have accountability documentation so that you can justify the numbers that are being spent so that Islanders know what they can expect. So, if you're going to build a medical home, you should be able to tell them if you're going to take on more patients off the patient registry and if that's going to solve our patient registry issue.

If we're not going to take patients off the patient registry, you need to tell Islanders that as well, and unfortunately, without a

business case, you're not telling Islanders anything.

I will leave it at that. Do you have anybody else on the list? Oh, you don't. Okay. I will try to move on then. Do you want me to keep going?

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

**Ms. Beaton:** Let's talk about the new KCMH funding. Where in this does it sit with the five-year plan? Where does the new KCMH fit into the five-year plan?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** Yeah, I think there is a note on page 4 of the handout that talks to the hospital space, I think here, a couple references. Community health centre.

Yeah, the hospital replacement, 22.8 over five years. So, the master planning is scheduled to commence in this year, and I think there's just the RFP will be awarded shortly for the group that will lead along with government in the master planning process, and based on what the note has indicated, that there's funding to commence construction in '26-'27, so not the last year but the second last year of this Capital Budget.

**Ms. Beaton:** So, it's my understanding that the initial spend is planning.

I attended the Health PEI board meeting down in Brudenell, where several people from the community were there to present on what they wanted to see in their new hospital. Can you tell me when the public consultation for this will begin? Will there be public meetings and that kind of thing that will be happening?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I cannot. So, there'd be a project team that is established with some professional planners and the staff of Health PEI.

Again, the master plan process is just that, is trying to gauge/understand what's needed, not only today, but many years into the future, and that process will unfold, I guess, beginning this year.

**Ms. Beaton:** I'm just curious, under this consultation with the public, is it basically the sky's the limit? I know there's been

discussion around dialysis and different things like that. Is it basically an open book right now of what can go into that new hospital, that new facility?

**Gordon MacFadyen:** I suspect it always starts with an open book, but they would be looking at the population estimates into the future. They'd be looking at some of the health determinants and health issues of the population and where it makes sense to develop locally-based services.

I suspect that they'll be there, but again, that'll all unfold during the planning process.

**Ms. Beaton:** Okay, I'm sure that'll be an interesting public consultation because there's a lot of requests and they're pretty passionate about what they would want to see in their building down there.

I'm going to move on to previous requests. Over the last three years, we've been asked to –

**An Hon. Member:** Call the hour.

**Chair:** The hour has been called.

**Mr. McLane:** Chair, I move 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 supply to His Majesty, 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.

Hon. members, the hour has been called, I'll call upon the hon. Member from Morell-Donagh.

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

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, that this House adjourn until November 10<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m.

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

Drive safe, everyone.

The Legislature adjourned until Thursday,  
November 10<sup>th</sup>, at 1:00 p.m.