

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Darlene Compton

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The Legislature sat at 1:04 p.m.

[Hon. D. Compton in the chair]

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Welcome back to all of my colleagues for another day of debate in our provincial Legislature and to all those who are tuned in at home watching the proceedings today.

[1:05 p.m.]

I'd like to begin my remarks by welcoming those Islanders who are participating in the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians twinning program. They'll be more formally and individually recognized by the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and I'm sure other colleagues in here who had the pleasure to work closely with all of you today, but thank you very much for being here and I hope your day was spent and continues to be spent learning about the fascinating and wonderful things parliamentarians can do to make life better for all Islanders and Canadians. Welcome, and thanks for participating in that.

I also want to say hi to Anne Christopher from Summerside, who is here, a good, loyal friend of mine for a number of years who pointed out recently that I haven't been up for a cup of coffee or tea lately to the house. I'm working on it, Anne; I'll get there, I promise. I know the welcome mat is always rolled out.

I had the great honour on Saturday evening to join Mayor Kutcher from Summerside and Mayor Brown from Charlottetown to present the winning medals to Canada White, who won the World Under-17 Hockey Challenge in a very thrilling game at the Eastlink Centre in Charlottetown; 2-1 in overtime. A very exciting game. The place was electric; the place was full. It was great to see so many Island hockey fans out to enjoy a first-class event.

It was great for PEI tourism in the shoulder season to welcome hundreds and hundreds of those from all across the world, really, to our shores to see the best we can offer, and they did see the best we can offer, as the City of Charlottetown and the City of Summerside cooperated and collaborated wonderfully on a first-class event with over 150 volunteers assisting in the process. I heard from players and managers and family members of what a great destination PEI was for hosting this and how they can't wait to come back again someday. Congratulations to all who pulled that off.

I also wanted to say that down your way, Madam Speaker, Belfast Mini Mills is a company that I'm very familiar with from my previous time working in government, but have been operating for over 30 years. They're going to close down the retail component of the mill shop, Linda and Hazel, who have been running this for a very long time. But they're going to pass on to the next generation. Linda's sons Ethan and Matthew Nobles and their cousin Tyler Spencer will keep on rolling, making these miniature mills for export all around the world. Believe it or not, in little Garfield, PEI, and Murray River, Prince Edward Island, we've been exporting mini mills to over 50 countries around the world. It's a very growing and thriving business with a waiting list.

Congratulations to Linda and Hazel for their innovation, for their persistence, for their patience, and now for passing this on to the next generation. A great Island success story.

Also, I was very interested and somewhat surprised to read that Andrew Murray from Aslan Renewables, a company that was started just a few years ago here in Stratford, is going to be part of a book recognizing King Charles III. Andrew had this vision where he could take rivers and streams and abandoned dams in Prince Edward Island and capture some hydroelectric energy on a small scale in Prince Edward Island. We're working with him as a government to take that and put it into action. It's a really exciting project, being recognized in a book written by King Charles III, in his recognition of his taking to the throne and seeing the innovation throughout the Commonwealth.

Congratulations to Andrew and that company. Very interesting and fascinating attribute for a growing company, once again, here in PEI.

Finally, I do want to recognize the Diwali celebrations that took place this weekend. Diwali is the Festival of Lights symbolizing light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge. Organizing this in Prince Edward Island is such an amazing thing to see in a growing and diverse province such as ours. To all of the communities and community members who celebrated this weekend, thank you very much.

I hope we enjoy the proceedings here today, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to welcome all those who are watching online and those who are in our public gallery today. It's really great to have it full today with a lot of women who are obviously interested in politics. This twinning program is a great opportunity for all of you to see what it's like in the day-to-day life of a parliamentarian, regardless of what gender it is.

[1:10 p.m.]

Welcome to you all here today: Kelly, Jennifer, Emma MacPhail, Emma Huggan, Bella, Olivia, Sadie, Precious, and of course, a familiar face in there, Mary-Ann Gaudet from Tignish. I look forward to speaking with you all in about an hour's time or so. Also, I want to say hi to Sarah, Kari, and Chanarae, who are with the CWP program. They're in here with the PEI Coalition for Women in Government. Welcome.

Remembrance Day services: on Saturday I had the opportunity to participate in Tignish and Palmer Road. Tignish, it was beautiful at the start and then the skies basically opened up and it was wet. I was so wet, but I was amazed at – I'll use one lady; she's a 92-year-old lady who was with the auxiliary. For a full hour, stood there, drenched, and never moved. Talked to her afterwards and she never complained once because she said,

“This is just a little part that I can do. Everyone else in the past has done so much, that they went through, I can't complain.” I admire her very much for doing that.

Canada White wins the World Under-17. That happened here on Prince Edward Island. Congratulations to all the team and all of those who had any part in organizing it here on Prince Edward Island and for hosting it. They did a wonderful job.

Charlottetown Islanders return to home ice here on November 14th.

Another thing I just saw when I was scrolling through Facebook a while ago is the PEI Agriculture Sector Council are now receiving nominations for the PEI Agriculture Employer of the Year. This goes out to an employer who goes above and beyond to make the work experience more positive. The nominations are now open, and the deadline is the 15th of December. I encourage anybody out there, an employee who wants to nominate their employer, please do so.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate Stratford resident Andrew Murray, as mentioned by the Premier. He will be in the King Charles III book on his hydroelectric pilot – well, actually, his hydroelectric pilot program will be announced, or I guess it is announced, here with the Province. It's something to look forward to because that will hopefully give 10% of PEI's power usage by 2035 and will also power communities worldwide. It's great to have that ingenuity and that individual who created this from Prince Edward Island.

With that, I wish everyone a great day. We're going to get to it.

Thanks.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Good afternoon and welcome back to my colleagues. Welcome to everyone joining us today in the gallery.

Of course, as was mentioned, these are people participating in the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians twinning program, where Island women between the ages of 17 and 25 get to spend some time with a woman MLA to experience a little bit of parliamentary life. It wasn't long enough; we didn't get to spend enough time together.

The participants that were with us in our office today were Kelly Tuttle, Mary-Anne Gaudet, and Jennifer MacDonald. They sent me a memo back in October to tell me to wear pink. I had pink hanging in my office but no black blazer to go with it. In my heart, I am wearing pink. We also have Emma MacPhail, Emma Huggan, Bella Reid, Olivia McNeill, Sadie McNeil and Precious Onogwu. Welcome, and thank you for being here with us today. I hope that you learned lots and that you're hungry for more because we'd love to see you in here someday.

Also in the public gallery today, as was mentioned, are the three members making up the Coalition for Women in Government: Sarah Outrum, Kari Kruse, and Chanarae Turnquest. Thank you for being with us today.

We all had the opportunity to take in the Remembrance Day services in our areas this past weekend; as always, a time to reflect and a time to give thanks and to remember where we came from, as the Speaker mentioned the other day, so eloquently put it, just to remember where we came from because we don't want to see history repeating itself. That's always a very valuable lesson, especially this time of year. I headed to the legion in Charlottetown on Grafton Street afterwards, always a really nice ceremony with the best potato leek soup I've ever tasted in my whole entire life.

The *Ceilidh in the City* will be showcasing rising stars of PEI music scene, tomorrow, Wednesday, November 15th, on the main stage at the Jack Blanchard Centre. For 13 years, the mandate of this organization has been to showcase young Island musicians. Kendall Docherty is the host and special guest coordinator for the show, and said all musicians need to start performing somewhere and we want to give them the same opportunity that someone once gave us.

[1:15 p.m.]

The young rising stars on stage Wednesday night will include the all-girl indie rock band called Scarf Store featuring Colonel Gray students Golnar Saegh, Gerrica Doucette, Jordyn Knox, and Jane Atkinson; also, 14-year-old Cole Brioux from Emyvale; of course, the talented Samil Sunil from Charlottetown; and 13-year-old Autumn Grace, who will be making her debut performance at the show. I would love to wish them all the best. That sounds like a great show.

Joining these young musicians tomorrow evening will be the regular hosts of the ceilidh, Kendall Docherty, Peter Burke, Brian Langille, and Brian Knox. The doors open at 6:30 for a 7:30 showtime. It sounds like it's going to be a great show.

I'd like to wish everyone a great rest of the day.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

S. Dillon: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I do rise today to welcome our guests in the gallery. They are the participants of the twinning program, as well as the Coalition for Women in Government. I'd also like to say thank you to my colleagues who have helped to make today such a success. I will have more information in my member statement later.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Early Years.

Hon. N. Jameson: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure to rise today. Welcome back to all of my colleagues. I hope you all had a nice long weekend. Welcome to all those joining us here in the gallery today. It's certainly been a day filled with learning, I'm sure, and experiences. We're just so grateful you took the time out of your busy schedules to be with us.

I have one young lady who's been joining me with the twinning program. Her name is Emma Huggan; she's from the district. Emma, thank you for being here. She's just within a stone's throw of my house so I get to see lots of Emma, walking her dog. We get lots of little conversations around the neighbourhood.

I know all the names have already been mentioned into Hansard, so I won't do that over again, but again, welcome to all of you. It's just amazing to witness young leaders like those with us here today who inspire such confidence and such inspiration for a promising future ahead. I certainly cannot wait to see what each of you do in your future and I'm sure that we will be seeing some of you in seats down here at some point in your futures.

Again, thank you all for being here today.

I also want to thank the MLA from Charlottetown-Belvedere and Emily Doiron, our clerk, for helping to coordinate this event. I know you folks put a lot of work into it and I really do want to say thank you on behalf of all of us.

Thank you.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to say hello to everyone watching from District 14 Charlottetown-West Royalty, and especially to our guests today. I'm the women's critic on this side, so I ask as many questions as I can, and we need you to do what you're doing. Take in interest in this because our future needs you. I'll let some of the girls know; I tipped them off with the questions I was going to ask. They know what I'm going to ask today in the Legislature. So, hopefully you find some interest here today.

Just want to say a special congratulations to the women's Holland College rugby team who won the ACAA Championship, beating Mount Allison. They're the champs. If that wasn't enough, the women's soccer program at Holland College – incredible – they won a bronze medal at nationals. They're the third best team in the country. Big congratulations

to them. What an outstanding season for everything they've done. So, way to go, Holland College soccer program.

This week is Trans Awareness Week. It's a week to celebrate transgender – and it leads up to the day of remembrance for our trans community, which memorializes victims of transphobic violence. A very important week. You can learn a lot this week and be supporting and being there for those activities.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Hello again to everybody in the district.

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

H. MacLennan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Welcome to those in District 23 watching. Welcome to the young women in the gallery today. I'd also like to give a shout-out to Anne Christopher, a big supporter. Yes, Premier, her door is always open for a visit, anybody.

I'd also like to say congratulations to Brooke MacArthur who I spoke about last week. She competed in the North American competition in Montreal on the weekend and she finished first. It was quite an achievement for her.

Thank you.

[1:20 p.m.]

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

T. DesRoches: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'd just like to welcome everybody back home in District 21 who may be watching online. I just wanted to rise today and welcome all the women in the gallery, especially one; one of our past Pages. She's a District 21 resident, Olivia. It's great to see her here. I'm sure that her younger brother was really pleased to get a big hug outside as he's one of our Pages. She told all the other women, "This is my little brother."

Also, I'd just like to give a shout-out to the person who drove by my house this

weekend who put a smile on my face. Now, I don't know if they were a district member or not, but I decided I was going to cut my grass this weekend, one last time to mulch the leaves. I just don't know where my mind was, but I wasn't paying attention and I kind of got a mark from it. I drove the lawnmower right into the tree and knocked myself off the lawnmower. Someone driving by decided to give a couple of beeps. I had a lot of unparliamentary words under my breath, but when they hit the horn, I put a smile on. [Laughter]

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Tourism, Sport and Culture.

Hon. C. Deagle: Thank you, Madam Speaker. A pleasure to rise.

I also wanted to mention – I know the Premier mentioned it – the World U-17 Hockey Challenge. It was a good gold medal game and it was a good boost for tourism in the off-season in fall. That was good to see; lots of people around Charlottetown and Summerside.

The Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty mentioned the Holland College women's bronze medal, which is a huge accomplishment on their part. I think that's the highest they've ever finished in Canada. That's a huge accomplishment. Jonathan Vos, head coach; Kristyn Visser, an assistant coach; Brandon Eagle; and my sister-in-law, Laura Younker. Laura Deagle is an assistant coach. So, I just want to wish a congratulations to all of them.

Thank you.

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

Hon. B. Ramsay: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise today and to welcome everyone into the gallery; my friend, Anne Christopher, as well; and to the young ladies who are here today with the twinning program. Thank you for taking the time to come and join us today.

I was twinning with Olivia McNeill, who is a resident of Summerside, my home city. Again, as an MLA said, Olivia was a Page here last session. It's really nice to have you all here today. Thank you very much for coming.

The folks in District 22, of course, I'd like to say hi to them. Everybody says the best district in the province; well, I think it's 22.

Hon. D. King: (Indistinct)

Hon. B. Ramsay: Oh, come on now, Premier.

[Laughter]

I'd like to just speak about the memorial services this weekend in Summerside and all across Prince Edward Island. I had the opportunity to attend the one in Summerside. I met some wonderful people there, as I do every year, but this year, I had the opportunity to meet Mrs. Marge McKenna. Marge is 101; she will be 102 in June. She's a beautiful veteran. She comes every year. Her family gets her there. She comes from a seniors' unit in Summerside. It's really, really nice that she's able to make it and that they put the effort into getting her there. That was heartwarming for me, as well as all the veterans. I want to thank every single one of you for the sacrifice that you made for us. It was a wonderful weekend; a wonderful Saturday.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Winsloe.

Z. Bell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise and say hello to everyone in District 10 Charlottetown-Winsloe. I think everybody in the gallery – welcome you all – I think everybody's been named. I'm going to say hello to Steven. It's his second time in here visiting us in the Legislature, and I believe he has some experience in the Legislature in the north.

Also, I want to say hello to Delia Tassell, who's joining us as well. Thank you very much.

Speaker: I just want to get up and recognize the young ladies in the gallery. It was my pleasure to host them during lunch. They got to listen to a little bit of my story. I want to thank you for your attention. I hope it wasn't too boring, but the one thing I did say to them when we were getting our picture taken here is, it's the one thing you don't think about when you run to be an MLA and you become an MLA: you have to get your picture taken all the time. Anyway, that's part of it. Probably the easiest part.

Thank you very much for coming and joining us for the twinning program, and thank my colleagues for organizing that. Thank you, Emily, for all the work that you've done.

[1:25 p.m.]

The hon. Leader of the Third Party stole my thunder because I was going to read your names into Hansard. I don't know if all of you understand or know about Hansard, but your names are now in that record for eternity. Everyone can read back and see that you were in attendance. When you become a minister, MLA, or a Premier, they can see that you were here back in 2023.

I want to thank each and every one of you for coming. I want to thank the PEI Coalition for Women in Government for helping with all of the process today.

Hon. Premier, thank you for mentioning Belfast Mini Mills. It's a wonderful business in our community. No one would ever know it's there. Even from the road they wouldn't know it's there, other than a little sign. Linda and Hazel and their mother, Sheila, and Doug, the whole family are very, very involved, and it is amazing.

I get the final word: I just want you all to know that District 4 Belfast-Murry River is the best district on PEI. [Laughter]

Thank you.

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Donagh.

Remembering Jim MacAulay

S. MacEwen: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's an honour to rise today to recognize the remarkable life of my friend and mentor Jimmy MacAulay, who passed away this summer. When Jimmy passed this summer, I knew my first member statement in the Assembly would be about him.

He was proud of his roots in St. Peters Bay and throughout the years, Jimmy has made exceptional contributions in his community and to our province as an incredible educator, leader, mentor, and advocate.

Jimmy's teaching career spanned four decades in addition to serving as principal of the Morell Regional High School until his retirement in 1997, which was my last year there. He was inspirational and mentored many of his former students in leading positive change, including for those who struggled with addiction. No one will ever know the lives he has touched and helped change with addiction throughout PEI.

He served as president of the St. Peters Area Development Corporation and understood the important of helping people connect dreams with action. He saw opportunity, regardless of the situation. He was a catalyst for development and revitalization, leading the transformation of the former St. Peters Consolidated School into the St. Peters Bay Complex, which is a model for other communities. He was also involved in the very early days of bringing all the players together for UPEI's Canadian Centre for Climate Change and Adaptation, having it overlooking his beloved St. Peters Bay.

Jimmy was a tireless advocate for his community and a natural leader. He was active in his church and helped spearhead amalgamation in the church, positive change in local communities, and improvements in service to veterans throughout his volunteer efforts.

In honour of these efforts, Jimmy has received numerous awards in his lifetime, including the Meritorious Service Medal from the Royal Canadian Legion, the Red Cross Recognition Award in 1994, the Charlie Ryan Award in 2000, an honorary degree from UPEI in 2012, the Pillar of the Community Impact Award in 2016, and the Order of Prince Edward Island in 2017.

Jimmy was known for his voracious walking habits; always active, always going. It's fitting: his last active walk was with Leonard "Blueberry" MacKinnon throughout the halls and the gym in the St. Peters School. So fitting.

His wife, Laurretta, and his whole family and his community grieve a driving force in rural PEI. Jimmy provided an excellent example of love, family, community, and province, and giving of himself to better future for us all.

Quite simply, we need more Jimmy MacAulays in the world.

[Applause]

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

BGC Prince County

M. MacKay: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the Boys and Girls Club in Summerside. I would also like to recognize Adam Brinkley for his phenomenal leadership as well as the entire staff at BGC for their incredible contributions.

BGC offers programming for children aged four through 12 which incorporates healthy living, education, physical activity, and creativity components. The Youth Engagement Centre located in Summerside provides structured preventative programming for youth ages 12 through 18, emphasizing in leadership, recreation, creativity, and education.

The CCU Youth Engagement Centre offers a combination of activities, events, and programming where youth and their families can build healthy relationships, discover their dreams, learn life skills, and ultimately achieve their goals. Most recently, BGC Prince County has added LifeHouse, which is a safe, secure, inclusive, and supportive transitional housing and emergency shelter for women and their children in the Prince County region.

[1:30 p.m.]

I would like to see the BGC extend the footprint of their services to the Kensington area. Offering similar services in Kensington would enhance the standard of living for our community and meet the needs of many. These services would make you feel welcome and safe while providing a place for them to learn life skills to prepare them for their respective futures.

BGC Prince County would be a great partner as they have a well-established track record working in partnership with communities. BGC is a pillar in the community. Thank you for the valuable work you do in the Prince County region.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Twinning Program

S. Dillon: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am delighted to rise today to recognize the participants in our twinning day, a day when women parliamentarians are paired with young ladies from across our province.

I again would like to state for the record the following ladies who took part in our twinning program: Mary-Ann Gaudet, Emma Huggan, Jennifer MacDonald, Emma MacPhail, Olivia McNeill, Sadie McNeil, Precious Onogwu, Bella Reid, and Kelly Tuttle.

Today the elected women in this Chamber spent the morning participating in a program on behalf of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians. CWP is a network of women members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, which is an international organization made up of Commonwealth nations. The CWP international network provides a means of building the capacity of women elected to Parliament.

CWP has a mission to assist Canadian women and girls to discover their political potential, experience the fulfillment of a career in public service, and to create a better society. As a part of their mandate, the CWP Canadian Region has created a grant

program for parliamentarians across Canada to create twinning programs, which is an opportunity for young women to be twinned, or partnered, with women parliamentarians.

This program aims to allow participants to experience parliamentary life, to generate political interest among young women, and to offer women parliamentarians the opportunity to educate, connect, empower, and engage our young leaders of tomorrow.

In Prince Edward Island, there have only been 36 women elected to this Assembly. The first woman who was elected to this Assembly, Jean Canfield, was on May 11th, 1970. As a society, we are striving to close this gap and support women in becoming elected officials.

This has been an exciting day of sharing and learning and I hope our participants will enjoy the proceedings this afternoon. A huge thank you to Emily Doiron, who was instrumental in organizing this day, and thank you to my colleagues who were more than willing to participate in our day.

Also, a reminder to all members in our House that immediately following the proceedings today there will be a small social in the hallway from five to 5:30.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Premier said that he spoke to many, many people about the problems at the Community Outreach Centre and the need to support vulnerable people here on Prince Edward Island.

Support and plan for outreach centre model (further)

Now, I've asked multiple times for the Premier to table the entries from his calendar that would indicate the time, the place, and the nature of these meetings. It's a pretty simple request. Will the Premier table those today, and if not, what is his explanation?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Madam Speaker, it's my intention to table when it comes time in the docket to do so at the request of the hon. member. I'd also probably take some time to scribble down the people I've talked to in the last year about the issues surrounding not just the outreach centre in Charlottetown but the services that we're required and obligated to offer on behalf of vulnerable Islanders.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I look forward to receiving that shortly.

It's clear that the challenges associated with vulnerable people and addictions are getting out of control. The sad fact of the matter is this: as the problem grows worse and worse, this do-nothing government has neglected its responsibilities, and as a result, communities and individuals have suffered. For instance, it was reported that the outreach centre first served about 15 clients, but according to government's own documentation, that number has grown to 365.

Question to the Premier: Is this the Premier's version of success, a massive increase in the number of people who are so desperate that they have to rely on the mismanagement services of this do-nothing government?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Madam Speaker, I'm not sure there's success when we talk about a growing number of people within our population who need services. I'm not sure there's any success for anybody to take within that.

[1:35 p.m.]

I do think that because of the leadership of the government and the many partners who play a very important role in providing these services, that more and more of these services are being offered to more and more people who need them, and I think overall that is a very good thing.

I think a lot of these issues that we're struggling with right now for the first time, at least in PEI's history, we're bringing them out of the shadows where they should be, and we're dealing with them in a very public way because I think the situation requires that, and I think our people deserve that, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Obviously, if the number is increasing, then the supports from the program that are there now are not working.

Government's only success seems to be increasing the number of vulnerable Islanders in our province. Furthermore, their do-nothing efforts have also resulted in services that no one thinks are professional or helpful.

I had a constituent reach out to me, someone who was struggling to get clean and stay sober. He had been to Mount Herbert and was released but had absolutely nowhere to go. He told me on the phone that he couldn't go to Bedford MacDonald House or the Community Outreach Centre for fear that he would relapse due to the drug use at both locations.

Access to addiction supports

Question to the Minister of Health: What would you say to this person who is trying to stay sober and who cannot access the services he needs safely for fear of relapsing?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Madam Speaker, I would just say that I would be careful of the language that gets used in here. I think it would be quite and rightfully offensive to

people working at the Canadian Mental Health Association, for example, or PEERS Alliance, or the Native Council of PEI, or the dozens and dozens of others – the United Way – to suggest that nothing good is happening here in Prince Edward Island. I think it's very careless language and it's probably just inflaming a situation that doesn't need inflammation.

Does government need to do a better job? Absolutely. Is this the job of all of us, to work together to make sure we're doing the best job we can to provide these services? Absolutely. And I'd ask that members of this House be very careful with using that language that is causing deep divisions within our province that we don't need to be dealing with right now, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

This Premier can stand up, and instead of dealing with the real issues and answering the questions, he's going to spin, he's going to deflect, and he's going to do absolutely nothing about it.

Our addictions and mental health system has glaring gaps in it. There are pitfalls that oftentimes patients are left to navigate on their very own. I've witnessed that myself. Through this government's do-nothing approach and the mismanagement of the outreach centre, they are actually making it harder for Islanders who want to get sober to do so.

Question to the Minister of Health: Why are you seemingly satisfied to do nothing while your government fosters an unsafe environment for those who are seeking supports with addiction in this province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. M. McLane: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I would disagree with the comment that we are not providing supports. Obviously, we always want to do better, but again, we have lots of programs to support abuse issues

within our community. I think we have to recognize the toxicity of drugs these days within our community. It's not the same as what we grew up with. When fentanyl and similar drugs enter a jurisdiction, we see really damaging effects to that. We will continue to support those who need us.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Madam Speaker, this government's determination to drag its heels to avoid dealing with the addictions crisis in this province is inexplicable.

Based on their own numbers, this government's do-nothing approach has hurt more vulnerable Islanders than it has helped. Simply put, this government has failed. Their approach has failed, their response has been mismanaged, and they are continuing to fail Islanders who are struggling with addictions. I know it, Islanders know it, and it would seem that the only people who don't know it are actually government members.

Question to the Minister of Health: Will you please explain how services for those who are struggling with addictions and recovery are supposed to help if the clients are too scared to seek help for fear of relapse because of your government's mismanagement?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. M. McLane: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the question.

I would also point out that we do have a mental health navigator too, so anyone who is struggling to access services should reach out to access some of those services. We have inpatient withdrawal management, we have outpatient withdrawal management; I was actually thanked by a physician during my tour about the Opioid Replacement Therapy Program. He actually sought me out just to say thank you for putting that program in place.

[1:40 p.m.]

So, we are trying to support Islanders who are dealing with addictions.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Madam Speaker, let's talk about the mental health navigator. I called her myself less than two weeks ago on a Friday because I was dealing with a constituent who was getting released from Mount Herbert and had nowhere to go. Called the number; the answering machine said: Thank you for calling... We will get back to you within five business days.

How the heck is that supporting Islanders who are struggling?

Mental health navigator

As we know, this government has hired an individual to deal with the fallout from this government's do-nothing mismanagement of the outreach centre to work out of the Executive Council office, which is run under the authority of the Premier.

Will the Premier table the contract signed with this person with their mandate, compensation, and timeframes?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Absolutely, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Madam Speaker, I'm going to go to the Minister of Housing.

We all know that government is trying to move the outreach centre to a new location. The minister, the Premier, the operator; everyone is saying the current location is not working, after, of course, the outcry from the community.

We still don't know whether the City will approve that plan and all Islanders now know that you are unable to provide any sort of backup plan, all while tensions continue to build in the community amongst those who are trying to access safe services.

Support and plan for outreach centre model (further)

Can the minister provide a firm date that will see the Community Outreach Centre close at its current location, regardless of whether the City approves the minister's plans?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing, Land and Communities.

Hon. R. Lantz: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We do intend to move the outreach centre from Euston Street to Park Street on a temporary basis. I would consider this an interim measure as we take stock of our service delivery model and how this may evolve going forward, with the help of our advisor that we have.

Our commitment to the public, to the City, to the clients who use the outreach centre, was that we can close the site at Euston Street and move it to Park Street within 60 days of a favourable decision from the City of Charlottetown.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

But that still doesn't answer the backup plan part. If the backup doesn't happen, what's this government going to do? Are they going to close the outreach centre without any supports and services? Be clear in your answers. You're not being clear. This is two weeks of questions.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) lobbying for (Indistinct)

Hon. H. Perry: I've been lobbying to close the current operation as it currently operates because the services and programs –

[Interjections]

Speaker: The member has the floor.

Hon. H. Perry: – that are not being provided –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Hon. H. Perry: Really. I'd like to bring some of these vulnerable Islanders to your office.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Hon. H. Perry: You won't see it. Of course, you won't.

The Minister of Housing –

An Hon. Member: I'll visit them. You won't.

Hon. H. Perry: You go visit them? Really?

[Interjections]

Speaker: Hon. members, when someone is asking questions, please refrain from the heckling. When someone is addressing someone else in the House, could you do it through the Speaker?

Thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Minister of Housing has stated several times that his department has been in contact with the City of Charlottetown prior to the announcement of the plan to move the Community Outreach Centre from one community to the next without changing any of the programming that is causing the problems experienced by its clients, by the staff, and by neighbours alike.

Question to the Minister of Housing: Can you please table all written communications between your department, including yourself, your deputy ministers, your staff, and any and all city officials about the proposed move and the variance application?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing, Land and Communities.

Hon. R. Lantz: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The variance application, I believe, has not been submitted to the City yet. It's under final review and may, in fact, be submitted by the end of day today.

I'll commit to bringing back what communications we possibly can that's allowable. I understand that the member may have a channel for intercepting some of those communications without my help, but I'm happy to provide information about our discussions with the City.

We've had productive discussions as recently as this weekend. I've begun making phone calls to members of city council to ask if they believe they have information. Of course, the process is just getting underway, but I want them to know that they can be in touch with me at any time throughout the process to ask questions and learn more about what we have planned.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[1:45 p.m.]

Support and plan for outreach centre model (further)

I'm not sure if I'm going to have to intercept this one or not, but Minister of Housing, there's an ongoing environmental assessment taking place at Park Street. Will you table the draft report, which you said you already have and you're working on to make decisions? Will you table that today or tomorrow?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing, Land and Communities.

Hon. R. Lantz: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'll speak with my department and see what we're able to disclose at this point.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As we said last week, until we get the answers from this do-nothing government,

we're going to keep asking the same questions.

Reporting and contracts from outreach centre (further)

To the Minister of Housing: Tomorrow, will you table every monthly incident report from the Adventure Group since they signed a contract with your government to operate the Community Outreach Centre?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing, Land and Communities.

Hon. R. Lantz: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I believe I answered this question last week. I'll make every attempt to table what we can without violating anybody's privacy. We do have some concerns about the information that's contained within those reports, and those are legitimate concerns. We're talking about a very small group of people here, and there is some information that might make the identification of individuals possible through that information.

We've already begun the process of looking at it. I've informed the member that the operator of the outreach centre is in compliance with all the reporting requirements in their contract. It's just a matter of taking a close look at the data and the information contained and determining what can be released without violating any privacy provisions.

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

G. McNeilly: Because you said you would do that today and it's not here today. I'm going to move on.

Last Friday, the government proudly released its Fiona After-Action Review after a 14-month wait. I've read it and it's a whitewash. Even this do-nothing government should be embarrassed. It doesn't mention shelters, it doesn't mention vegetation management, and it barely mentions government's responsibility to keep Maritime Electric accountable to Islanders.

After the devastation Fiona caused and the government's poor response, I had hoped to see, at very minimum, a critical review. Instead, the government's do-nothing release and review stated that "the provision of fuel and critical supplies for the continuity of essential services [in this province] was excellent."

Fiona After-Action Review

Question to the Premier: How much did this pat-on-the-back report cost taxpayers?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: I'm not sure, Madam Speaker. I'll find out and share that information when I receive it.

I think every Islander would know that we went through the most devastating situation that we've gone through in our history with Fiona. It required us to take a comprehensive look at what we did well and what we needed to do better, and to provide a roadmap for us to make sure, if we ever have to deal with this again, that we're on a better footing. I think the report does that. As I think the presenter of the report on Friday suggested, a number of those recommendations are already in progress.

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

G. McNeilly: I would disagree with the word "comprehensive" with this report and how we handled Fiona and the aftermath of Fiona, Mr. Premier.

Madam Speaker, to say the provision of fuel and critical supplies for essential services was excellent in our province – remember back to what we went through – is not based on reality. No Islander would agree with that finding. In my district, there were people lined up, day after day, waiting for hours to fill jerry cans with fuel. Tensions were high. There were fights breaking out at service stations, Mr. Premier.

We did not learn anything from the Dorian report; went back to the same company and we got the same results.

Mr. Premier, how can you accept a report that says the provisions of fuel in this province were excellent during Fiona?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Madam Speaker, I think what we learned from that and what we prepared for this fall, which thankfully we didn't need to execute on, but we had our tank farm ready to be supplied with a generator so we could keep the fuel flowing. We've also started a program where we have sent – strategically to locations across Prince Edward Island – generators so service stations can actually offer fuel.

I think that was a devastating impact that Fiona dealt to Prince Edward Island. We're learning from it, and we'll use that as the blueprint to guide us as we deal with these issues into the future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Seniors living in Huntington Court, 501 Queen Street, were without power for more than 10 days. There were no emergency lights in the hallways, no water, no way to cook, no way to make a hot cup of tea. Do nothing, people suffer.

[1:50 p.m.]

Premier, do you agree with the findings of this report that your government conducted a well-coordinated response to the storm while hundreds if not thousands of seniors were left without food, power, and safe living conditions?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I think what the report tries to outline from the initial parts that I have read is that there was strong coordination within a lot of our partners to do a lot of things that needed to be done in Prince Edward Island after Fiona. I think, obviously, not having electricity for the length of time that we had caused a lot of challenges for a lot of Islanders, many of

which the hon. member raised in his preamble to the question.

Do I think it was one of the worst times in our province's history for 10 or 15 days? Yes. Are there impacts that we're dealing with since then? Absolutely. Are we trying to learn from the past and make it a little bit easier and better into the future? Absolutely.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

At 501 Queen, during the storm, part of the roof ripped off. Part of the roof ripped off. Water was coming in there. The following two or three days later, water was pouring into that facility. There was so much water damage in the hallway, common areas, and in people's units. These were people's home.

At Beach Grove, three days after the storm hit, people were stuck in their rooms because there was no power. You know where the generator was? It was off this Island. It was on the mainland. The generator wasn't here that you'd purchased. Things were not ready. We were not ready as a province.

Question to the Premier: Will you admit today that this report is simply a whitewash of what really happened and that your government's do-nothing approach exasperated difficulties on the Island?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Madam Speaker, as I say, when you have a hurricane, category three, ripping through a small island in the middle of the North Atlantic, horrible things happen. We've been able to avoid a lot of these in our recent history, but as we've been dealing with whether it's Dorian and now Fiona, sometimes you don't escape the grasp.

When these things happen in places like this, it is not uncommon to see lives disrupted, impacted. I know the frustration that goes along with that. We tried to work with all of our partners as quickly as we can to restore life to some kind of normalcy in the days following.

Are there things that we have learned and will continue to learn from Fiona? Absolutely. It was a horrible time to be in Prince Edward Island, but in light of that, we also saw some wonderful things take place, of community members looking out for one another and trying to make the best of a really horrible situation, which I would say is the Island way.

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

G. McNeilly: You're darn right they were, and they were there for everybody in Prince Edward Island. Our communities definitely were there. I'm focusing today on what the government needs to do now, because they didn't learn from Dorian, they didn't learn from Fiona. They went back to the same company and got the same results. We need to do better than that.

For weeks on end, Islanders waited in increasingly cold weather as they were forced to stand outside for hours to access minimum payments that government outsourced to the Red Cross. There are still reports of people who have been unable to receive access to the funds, through no fault of their own. This was something that the government organized.

Question to the Premier: How can you accept a report that finds your government's response acceptable when everyone was able to witness the extensive mismanagement of relief funds, some of which have still not been paid to Islanders who need it the most?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Well, again, Madam Speaker, this is an issue we have dealt with inside of this Legislature for a number of months following Fiona. Contrary to what people may think, putting money into the hands of individual Islanders through a payment system through government, the way our taxation system works now, is a lot more cumbersome than what maybe people will think, or it's easy to paint that as some kind of an excuse.

The reality is we tried to find the fastest way to get money into the hands of Islanders as fast as possible. I would say that we had put

money into the hands of over 50,000 Islanders, I believe, within 15 or 20 days of a natural disaster that took place. Was it perfect? Absolutely not. Was there a better way to do that? We haven't found one.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[1:55 p.m.]

The issues at UPEI have been known for ages. Back in 2013, the *Guardian* reported on the settlement of two sexual harassment complaints against the former president. Over the past 10 years, there have been 28 additional settlements made against members of the university.

UPEI NDAs and financials

Question to the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning: Have you requested detailed financial data from UPEI to find out how much has been spent protecting perpetrators through the 30 UPEI NDAs?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population.

Hon. J. Redmond: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the question.

Our department is certainly committed to working with UPEI, and we want to ensure that they do provide a healthy and safe learning and working environment for all. There is certainly no question about that.

The funds that we do provide our post-secondary institutions to operate are about people such as staff, faculty, students and community members that attend, as well as the programs that they offer and the infrastructure that they need to continue to grow, and that is what the intention is for our funding.

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

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I did not hear the answer to my question in there.

This government is using a see-no-evil, hear-no-evil approach. After I asked the current UPEI president in committee, he reported that almost \$700,000 was spent on nine NDAs that involved allegations of harassment, discrimination, or sexual harassment; \$700,000 of public money, money from taxpayers and students, used to protect the perpetrators.

Question to the minister: What have you done to make sure that UPEI does not spend another public cent on protecting perpetrators?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population.

Hon. J. Redmond: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Instances like this that have happened are devastating and we never want that to occur again. So, we are meeting regularly with them to ensure that they have the action plan in place, their work plan forward, and working with their advisory committee and their board to continue to make those necessary improvements to ensure that students, faculty, and staff are in an environment that is healthy and safe. We'll continue to do that.

Thank you.

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

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

That's the second question I didn't get an answer to. I'll try for the third.

One of the most concerning things I learned this fall were the details of the so-called "third-party confidential process" for staff and students to make disclosures of incidents of harassment and discrimination at UPEI. The process asks students and staff to share incredibly personal information and disclosures to a third-party firm in New Brunswick.

What they weren't told was that this firm was then directed to send these disclosures to the UPEI lawyer who has been legal counsel to UPEI throughout the time that 30 NDAs were signed.

Question to the same minister: For the safety and confidentiality of students and staff at UPEI, will you request that this disingenuous process be changed?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population.

Hon. J. Redmond: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Certainly, while I am looking after advanced learning, I want to make sure that we are doing things in the best interest of all who are part of the university community; staff, faculty, and students. We never want something like this to ever happen again. We want to continue to build upon a great resource that is beneficial to the learners who come here, the staff who work here, and we'll continue to work hard with UPEI to ensure that.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Last week, we finally received the report on our Fiona response, well over a year after the event, and it was sadly lacking in many critical details. It's the second report written by the Calian Group from Ottawa; indeed, it was authored by the very same person who wrote the Dorian report.

When I think back to Fiona and I re-read the hundreds and hundreds of emails that I received in the weeks after the storm, the main emotions of the folks who reached out to me were fear, frustration, and anger. This report reflects none of that. It doesn't represent the experiences of thousands of Islanders whose lives were turned upside down in a single night.

Fiona After-Action Review (further)

Question to the Premier: What actions will I find in this report to make sure that Islanders won't once again have to line up in the dark at 4 a.m., having driven halfway across the Island to prove that they are who they say they are, only to be turned away and told to come back the next day?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Madam Speaker, again, one of the most difficult and challenging times in our Island's history; not many easy days for any Islander in the wake of Fiona.

[2:00 p.m.]

I would suggest again that there are many things that we have learned. One of these would be – in response to the question – is there a simpler way to get money quickly into the hands of Islanders who need it? We are working internally to solve that problem.

The Red Cross did a lot of very positive work in the lead-up to that and got money out as quickly as possible to Islanders. Were there challenges with their process? Absolutely. Did it frustrate and anger Islanders? Absolutely. But once again, I would expect after going through a catastrophic event such as we did, it would be pretty hard not to find fear and anger all throughout Prince Edward Island, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point, your first supplementary.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thank you so much, Madam Speaker.

I asked what actions we'll find in this report and the answer to that is none because the scope of this report does not include a requirement for the Red Cross to explain the fiasco that unfolded for days and weeks and, actually, to this day, following the storm.

A question to the Premier: What actions will I find in this report to make sure that elderly Islanders living in government housing won't be left in the cold and the dark for almost two weeks because they weren't prioritized to be hooked up by Maritime Electric?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Again, Madam Speaker, trying to reconnect the power grid that was blown apart by Fiona proved to be a very challenging and taxing situation for everybody. I wish there was a button that I could press in my office to fix all those

things as quickly as possible but there isn't. You have to work with the reality of the situation that we're dealing with.

I would say again, there is lots that we learned that we need to be better prepared for. We were this time, this fall. Thankfully, we were spared the severity of the storm this time. We were much better prepared this time than last time, which is all you can hope and expect for. That would be the wishes of all Islanders heading forward.

Speaker: The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point, your second supplementary.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Again, I asked for what actions I would find in this report, and again, the answer is none. Islanders still don't know who is actually in charge of making those critical decisions about who gets hooked up first. Is it Maritime Electric or is it the government?

We don't know because the scope of this report didn't demand that Maritime Electric come in and explain what went so terribly wrong. Islanders were not only literally left in the dark, they had no idea what was going on and when they could expect to have power back, receive financial aid, or even be able to use their cell phones. No, there's no magic button in your office, Premier, but there's a choice you could have made.

Question to the Premier: The minister responsible last Friday said that this report will put PEI – and you just reiterated it this morning – in a much better position to respond to the next storm. But that's almost exactly what you said last time, only this time things were much worse.

A public inquiry – that's not the magic button but that's a choice you could have made, Premier – a public inquiry would have given us all the information we needed to do truly better next time.

Why did you prefer this incomplete and inadequate report instead of a public inquiry that would truly make Islanders much safer the next time around?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Well, Madam Speaker, this is an issue that has been addressed, I'd say, in a very significant way by the wonderful structure of our standing committees here. There were lots of public exchanges and questions asked; all information that our staff and our government has taken that has helped to implement some of the changes that we're trying to do.

I mean, what was different from Dorian to Fiona? The severity of the storm, for one. What happened? A hurricane came in and flipped our Island upside down and we were left to pick up the pieces. That's what we're trying hopefully to avoid in the future, but as an island province in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, we're very vulnerable and susceptible to these things, and short of putting a globe over the province, I don't what I'd have to do to keep the former Green leader happy, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

S. Dillon: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My questions today were developed by a participant in the twinning program initiative. Compliments to her.

The final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls produced 231 Calls for Justice.

Government's progress on MMIWG Calls for Justice

Question to the Premier: What steps are being made by government to protect our Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited individuals in reference to the May 2023 government report, *A Journey Towards Reconciliation*?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Thank you, Madam Speaker. A very good and important question like all of the questions here today.

[2:05 p.m.]

I'd say the first thing a government tries to do would be to build a society where it's safe to be who you want to be and love who

you want to love and worship who you want to worship. I think it all starts from that.

In relation to the report, we have a dedicated team, an Indigenous Relations Secretariat, that is working to implement the Calls for Justice. I think there are 73 that are directly of implication to Prince Edward Island of the 231 that we've been working on at the request of the former Leader of the Opposition. We do table a report in here each and every year to detail the progress, or sometimes lack thereof, in implementing these reports.

But I would say, in a nutshell, it's not the job of one department, it's the job of all the departments to work together to make sure that we're trying to make a positive working relationship in this province for all who call it home.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere, your first supplementary.

S. Dillon: I would agree that it's very important. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

A tragedy here early this summer serves as a reminder that these challenges are not going away and that these issues need more urgent action.

Question to the Premier: Do you feel that any of the timelines for action by government on these important issues need to be accelerated?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Another great question, Madam Speaker.

I would say that the implementation of government policy in general cannot be done quickly enough sometimes. I would say that there are many indications within this report on this topic that we're talking about where I'd like to see the accelerator pushed a little bit faster.

But we also have to understand that some of these things are multi-generational in nature.

They require a consultation process to make sure we're getting it right as we implement these changes. Some of them, as you know, aren't easy things to talk about, as well.

I've said in here a hundred times and I'll say it again, I'm impatient in general. I've become much more impatient in this job because it is frustrating sometimes that things can't happen as fast as you know they need to happen or as you'd like them to happen. But I would say in general, I'm happy with the process that we're on. Could some of these things be implemented faster? I would say, quite honestly, yes.

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

S. Dillon: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Intimate partner violence is a serious issue, and too often is the root of incidents involving missing and murdered Indigenous women and children.

Question to the Premier: What specific actions are we taking as a Province to combat intimate partner violence in our Island Indigenous communities?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: I want to thank the hon. member for the questions, and for your colleague, who so thoughtfully put them together.

Something that jumps out to mind quickly for me is that the Minister Responsible for Status of Women, along with her federal counterpart, announced this past August a historic bilateral agreement between PEI and the Government of Canada which will see almost \$10 million invested into PEI to support the implementation of the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence in PEI. I think that is a very significant effort that we're very proud to have been part of and to work with.

I think we're also very unique in PEI, where we have the ability to work very closely with both First Nations and the Native Council of Prince Edward Island to help implement a lot of these programs that directly impact our Indigenous community,

so I think that puts us in a very good position.

I really look forward to seeing how the program investment and the supports that go with that will work its way into everyday lives of those who need it, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Winsloe.

Z. Bell: *Merci, madame la Présidente. Aujourd'hui j'ai des questions en français et aussi en anglais.*

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today my questions will be in both French and English.

French Language Services Act

La Loi sur les services en français souligne où les programmes et services du gouvernement sont offerts en français pour les habitants de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard.

Question pour le ministre responsable des Affaires acadiennes et francophones : Quels types de programmes et services désignés seront offerts en français à l'avenir?

The *French Language Services Act* outlines where government programs and services are offered in French for Islanders.

Question to the Minister Responsible for Acadian and Francophone Affairs: What types of programs and services are currently designated to be offered in French?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development, Innovation and Trade.

Hon. G. Arsenault: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[2:10 p.m.]

Merci chers membres de vous intéresser à la francophonie. D'ailleurs moi aussi je vais pouvoir vous répondre en français avec 19 services désignés sous la Loi sur les services en français. Et on planifie d'en ajouter 12 à l'automne de cette année, alors plusieurs services et non seulement le service de traduction.

I was saying to the hon. member, we do have 19 services under the *French Language Services Act*. We're planning on adding 12 new ones in the fall. They're not only Translation Services, but to inform this House, Translation Services has been very busy as we have translated 1.2 million words with over 2,400 requests. So, it is a major part of our department, of our sector, but we do have many other services that we're providing.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Winsloe.

Z. Bell: *Cette loi a été adoptée en 2000 par l'ancien premier ministre Pat Binns et elle a été renouvelée en 2013 par l'ancien premier ministre Robert Ghiz.*

Question pour le même ministre : Est-ce que le gouvernement avait des plans pour une revue des actes pour vérifier que la loi atteint ses objectifs?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This act was first passed into law back in 2000 by former Premier Pat Binns and renewed in 2013 by former Premier Ghiz.

A question to the same minister: Does the government have any plans to undertake a review of this act to make sure that it is reaching goals?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development, Innovation and Trade.

Hon. G. Arsenault: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Merci encore pour la deuxième question. Et c'est sûr que l'engagement du gouvernement continue à avoir un intérêt particulier pour pouvoir développer ce qu'on va faire en tant que services au niveau des services de la Loi sur les services en français. Alors on travaille de très près avec le comité aviseur pour s'assurer qu'on représente bien les intérêts de la communauté.

Once again, we're working with the advisory committee and we're very engaged and very in tune with what's happening in the French communities. We want to make

sure that we're able to provide different services to the Francophone and Acadian Francophone community, and we will continue to do so by adding 12 new services come the fall of this year.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Winsloe.

Z. Bell: *Merci madame la Présidente. Pendant que notre population continue à grandir, le nombre de personnes qui ont besoin d'accès à ces programmes et services continueront également à croître.*

Question pour le ministre : Comment les outils, par exemple la Loi sur les services en français, continuent à soutenir la croissance de notre population sur l'Île?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As the population does continue to grow, a number of people who will require access to programs and services in French will also most likely grow.

Question to the same minister: How can tools like the *French Languages Services Act* support the continuing growth of our Island population?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development, Innovation and Trade.

Hon. G. Arsenault: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Encore une fois, comme vous pouvez voir on a fait beaucoup de travail au niveau des nouveaux arrivants en incluant la Stratégie sur l'immigration francophone. Alors on va continuer à faire ce travail-là qui va nous permettre de répondre aux besoins de ceux et celles qui se joignent à nous ici à l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard.

Once again, we're working on implementing the Francophone immigration strategy. It will be a document that will help enhance the work that we're going to be doing with newcomers to PEI and the ones who are specifically speaking French.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition, final question.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Access to addiction supports (further)

Question to the Minister of Health: Without defaulting to a general prearranged response, do you honestly believe that your current system of support for those seeking help to overcome addictions, that they are getting the proper help here on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. M. McLane: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I do thank the hon. member for the question.

I did write a few things down since his last question about some of the things that we stood up in the province. I think one of them we're very proud of is the addictions day program that now participants can attend. I believe we had 81 people attend that program since it first stood up. The staff, I was very proud of the accomplishments they've made in that program.

Again, we have the emergency short-stay unit which will be opening in late December/early January for crisis situations, which has four 72-hour rooms. Again, we have mental health clinics, we have mobile mental health, we expanded Lacey House, and I could go on for a while, but I think it's a pretty comprehensive list of support.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: End of Question Period.

Statements by Ministers

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

[2:15 p.m.]

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a most recent document in the media. It's called, *The little university that could(n't): UPEI's nightmare behind closed doors*, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Minister of Economic Development, Innovation and Trade.

Hon. G. Arsenault: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

By Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table the French translation of the Island Investment Development Inc. Annual Report for the period ending March 31st, 2023, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Social Development and Seniors.

Hon. B. Ramsay: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table the response of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate to the proposed *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*, and I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Housing, Land and Communities.

Hon. R. Lantz: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table the contract between the Government of Prince Edward Island and the Adventure Group highlighting three holdover provisions that allow the continuation of the terms and conditions beyond the original

term of the contract, and I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Housing, Land and Communities.

Hon. R. Lantz: Madam Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the Shelter Support Line – Additional Direction for Emergency Shelter Bed Utilization Approval Procedures, and I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Housing, Land and Communities.

Hon. R. Lantz: Madam Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table Safe and Appropriate Diversion, a document “designed to provide safe and appropriate diversion processes and information resource to staff ... who respond to the Emergency Housing Line,” and I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

By Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the provincial General Election of April 3rd, 2023, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Premier, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Tourism, Sport and Culture.

Hon. C. Deagle: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the 21st order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 21, *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*, Bill No. 32, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Tourism, Sport and Culture.

Hon. C. Deagle: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 32, *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Tourism, Sport and Culture.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Morell-Donagh to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

[2:20 p.m.]

[S. MacEwen in the chair]

Chair: The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intitled *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*.

Minister, would you like to make a motion to bring strangers to the floor?

Hon. B. Ramsay: Yes, I would.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Could I get you both to introduce yourselves and your title for Hansard, please?

Mike Henthorne: Sure. My name is Mike Henthorne. I'm the director of Child and Family Services and Child Protection.

Jill Hume: I'm Jill Hume. I'm the associate director of Child Protection.

Chair: Thank you, Mike and Jill.

Minister, would you like to start with an overview of the bill?

Hon. B. Ramsay: I would. Thank you, Chair.

I'm honoured to be here today to discuss the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*, which will replace the current *Child Protection Act*, which was enacted over 20 years ago.

This is an exciting day for our department and represents years of work. This act is about what is best for the children of Prince Edward Island. At the core of this legislation are the principles of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; the federal act respecting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, youth, and families; and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

This legislation provides clarity on the legal status of children in the care of their grandparents or alternate care providers, it allows the department to provide extended services to youth in care until they are 25 years of age, it provides for alternative pathways for the courts to address child safety concerns, and it limits the amount of time a child can be in the temporary care of the director of Child Protection.

I was pleased to table the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate's response to this bill. In the words of the advocate, this legislation is "historic, groundbreaking and aspirational" in all its promotion of children's rights.

Throughout the drafting process, staff in this Department of Social Development and Seniors have worked closely with the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate. While we were not able to reach consensus on every issue, we have worked together in the spirit of collaboration, respect, and understanding.

This bill has been strengthened as a result of the input and the feedback from the advocate. Indeed, we have benefited from the input from many stakeholders. I thank the many partners who have been engaged in working with our department on this special piece of legislation.

It is also very important to me to thank our staff for the tireless work that they do. Child protection work is hard, it's complex, and it requires making difficult decisions. Our staff gives so much of themselves to protect children. They support families and they strengthen communities.

[2:25 p.m.]

There is a proverb that says if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together. We want to go far, and we know there is more work to do once this bill is passed. We look forward to continued and ongoing collaboration with the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate and other stakeholders as we implement the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you, minister.

Is it the pleasure of the committee to go part by part, section by section, clause by clause?

An Hon. Member: Part by part.

Chair: Part by part.

G. McNeilly: Can we go section by section?

Chair: It's the will of the committee.

An Hon. Member: Section by section.

Chair: Start section by section? Okay.

Section 1: Definitions.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West
Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Thank you for coming in, minister and guests. Thank you for all your work on this.

Just a few questions on this, for the definition of "child," a person who is under

the age of 18. But in (o), youth means a child who is 16 or 17 years of age.

Can you talk about the difference there?

Mike Henthorne: Sure. Thank you for that question.

The definition there, we know in the real world, youth means adolescence and usually between the ages of 12 to 17, but for our act, we have a specific section on agreements with youth that is for 16- and 17-year-olds. That's why it was defined there like that. It matches what the content is in our legislation, not that we're trying to define youth in the broader scheme, but just in this legislation, we only refer to that in one of the sections on agreements with youth, and that's we defined it that way.

G. McNeilly: That's what just struck me funny; youth is 16 or 17. So it's just for the purpose of this act.

Mike Henthorne: Just for the purpose of this act alone.

G. McNeilly: There are some terms used in here that I thought maybe should have been defined but maybe aren't defined in here. Did we do enough work on defining this for people in the definitions section? Safety and wellbeing might be two that come to mind.

Mike Henthorne: I believe it's well looked at. We've spent an enormous amount of time with our legal services and our legislative writers to review all of the definitions to make sure that it's clear and we engage with our frontline staff who will be using the act every day. We feel that those are well laid out and are defined as they need to be in this act.

But I'm sure there are some terms that maybe those who aren't using the act as regularly – as to terminology around safety plans and family intervention plans that are common language to us that may not be familiar to everyone.

G. McNeilly: Just maybe one more. Just on guardianship, I know we're going to talk a little bit about that. Can you just tell me, because you're the experts, when does a guardianship – I know it says it "means, in relation to a child, the legal authority and

responsibility for making decisions in respect of the child.”

When does guardianship – and does this happen very often, that we see guardians be put in place in Prince Edward Island?

Jill Hume: Guardianship, in terms of our legislation, speaks to when a child comes into the care of the director or into the care of another person. It’s specific to when a child is removed due to significant safety concerns.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to start by saying thank you for bringing this forward. It has been a very long time coming. I also want to thank you for the relationship that you have developed with the Child and Youth Advocate. That was a very embarrassing, rocky start for government to do, but we’re getting there. I just want to say thank you. It’s been an evolutionary process.

The questions I have aren’t necessarily on this section, but things that would have happened before and kind of the general spirit of the bill. My only question on definitions was already asked.

[2:30 p.m.]

I’m wondering if, in general, when you were considering this bill, if you took into account the court case *B.J.T. v. J.D.*, where the Supreme Court of Canada looked to the PEI legislation for interpretation and it actually helped make the decision, which was in the preamble? In there was the about the best interests of the child, which have now established settled jurisprudence and predictability in child protection matters. A really important piece for the decision makers in that process in the protection of a child.

I’m just wondering, did you retain those provisions in this piece of legislation? I know that the preamble was removed, but just wondering, because we do rely on this, the Supreme Court of Canada. Were those provisions kept?

Chair: Just before you begin, we had agreed to go section by section, but are you okay to entertain questions that, I think, are relevant but just not – you’re wondering why something isn’t included in the bill?

K. Bernard: The preamble was removed, which would have been before definitions. I just want to make sure that what was in the preamble is still upheld in the legislation.

Mike Henthorne: I’d be happy to answer that.

Chair: Go ahead.

Mike Henthorne: Much like a lot of bills, government is seeming to move away from preambles. In this bill, in this piece of legislation, we have everything that would be included in a preamble embedded in our legislation itself. That way, we can make sure that it is law. Anything in preamble is not consider law, so everything that is considered – much like the case you described – is embedded in our legislation.

We can speak to the best interests of the child section. That was expanded to include a lot that would be in a preamble. On section 8, the right of a child to be heard, to take from the United Nations Rights of the Child section, and also, the rights of children in care; all of those sections are embedded in those principles.

The biggest one is to ensure that the decision making is always in the best interests of the child. In every piece of this legislation, the paramount point to consider is the best interests of the child. That sometimes would be in preamble, but that’s clearly laid out in our legislation, which is what we think is really in the best interests of children and the families we work with.

K. Bernard: I guess, I mean, it’s not really part of law. I guess I would have argued what the harm is of having it there if it’s been so important in cases. Just a quick comment, it’s just funny because we heard here the other day, “Well, that’s the way we’ve always done things, that’s the way we’ve always done things, that’s the way we’ve always done things.” Now, we’ve got a department who’s changing things up, which is a good thing. I would have loved to have said that Friday. It’s a really good

thing. I just want to ensure that we're not losing anything by losing that preamble.

Mike Henthorne: Yes. I can reassure you that everything that would be in a preamble is embedded in the act. We very significantly reviewed that with Legal Services and our legislative writers to make sure nothing was left out. We do feel like this will allow that there won't be any misinterpretation because sometimes clauses and things that are mentioned in preambles can be used as arguments for not the intended purposes of our legislation. In this way, it's very clear that the intentions are embedded in the legislation and very purposeful. Yes.

K. Bernard: Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Section 2: Best interests of the child.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Chair: Thank you, Chair.

The section that makes reference to a religious heritage rather than spiritual beliefs, which was requested by the Child and Youth Advocate; what would be the distinction between these two terms?

Mike Henthorne: Sure. We appreciated the advocate's list of recommendations and the dialogue we've had with him and his office. It certainly is a strong piece of legislation because of our work together.

[2:35 p.m.]

For that section, this actually came out of a recommendation from the Native Council of Prince Edward Island. They had submitted a recommendation suggesting – I guess is the best word – to reword that section to align with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 23, and to read the child's ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic background. They felt that that would be notably improved wording.

We modeled that clause of the legislation after the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We do feel like that was all taken into consideration and reviewed,

but that is the preferred wording in that section.

K. Bernard: I appreciate that.

Under the best interests of the child, there's no mention of a case involving an Indigenous child or child living with disabilities, and I'm wondering if you can explain why that wasn't added in.

Mike Henthorne: Section 2(1)(b) does define the best interests of the child to include "the child's physical, mental, emotional and developmental needs," so we feel that that captures one of your points.

This will probably come up later, but we have specifically tied in section 7, the entire act, to the federal *Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*. That applies to every section of this entire act, that the federal legislation supersedes this legislation, and it made it completely clear in section 7 that we must follow all aspects of the federal legislation.

In that, of course, it does spell out the definitions even further than this legislation goes, and we must follow that federal legislation.

K. Bernard: Great, thank you. I'm good, Chair.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you.

This section is important, the best interests of the child. When you go down and through it, when I asked you about the definitions before, I'm struggling here when it says "the child's safety and well-being." How do you define that? How do we define that?

Hon. B. Ramsay: Where are you?

Mike Henthorne: That would be 2(1)(a).

We don't need to define that so specifically. It's supposed to be broad because when we consider the best interests of the child, we have to ensure that we consider their safety and wellbeing. The reason that that is listed first is that that is of paramount concern and one that we look at every day when we are

using our authority under the act to investigate child abuse and neglect.

G. McNeilly: Yeah. Then the next one, it just talks about developmental needs. Is that defined? Are there criteria that you use to assess their developmental needs?

Mike Henthorne: Once again, we do feel that it's broad for a reason, because every child is different and we have to consider their best interests individually, and consider – like it says here – their “physical, mental, emotional and developmental needs.” That could look a lot different for every child.

This section sort of speaks to making sure that we have an overarching understanding of what best interest means. I don't think we want to define best interests, which is all this section, but we don't need to define specifically all the wording in that section because we want it to be broad and capture all those really sometimes unique needs of children that we work with.

G. McNeilly: And these are important. Just so I can understand, I'm starting to try to think of what your staff goes through and what they have to think like.

[2:40 p.m.]

“The child's relationship with the child's parents, other family members and other persons who are significant to the child.” When we come in to do the work that will be in the act, you come in and circle the child by interviewing and talking to everybody around that child's world, is that correct?

Jill Hume: Certainly, we'd have the ability to do that if it was deemed necessary.

G. McNeilly: Okay. And then I'll move to culture, ethnicity, linguistic things like diversity. Is your staff diverse enough to work with the children? There are diverse children out there. We just talked about how we surround ourselves, but their culture is different than ours.

How do we deal with cultural issues when we know that every kid is different, which we just talked about and we're talking about a broad spectrum? How do we do that for

diverse children in the system? Tough question.

Mike Henthorne: We engage with all stakeholders and families, and I think we are growing a diverse staff. We are recognizing the unique needs that children in our community have. We have a real strong passion for understanding their culture, their ethnicity, in all of the best interests of the child lens that we look at. We are constantly looking at ways to support staff and offer training and cultural awareness and how to intervene and work with families the best way we can in a very respectful, clear, and transparent way.

G. McNeilly: Yeah, because a lot of people come to me when they're – so I see this from a different lens because the families come to me, and sometimes they're not clear. Sometimes there are difficult situations. So, that's important and we can never really do enough. We're diverse, flying at a rapid rate in Prince Edward Island, but the supports are – we're playing catch-up.

Did you feel comfortable with the consultation? Who did you consult with from a diverse perspective in putting together this legislation in Prince Edward Island?

Jill Hume: We consulted extensively with our Indigenous counterparts at NCPÉI and MCPEI. We did all public engagements. Can't really comment on who all took advantage of that public engagement.

Mike Henthorne: I can't imagine a piece of legislation – we've been working on this for five years. There's been significant engagement with the community, with staff, with stakeholders, and we feel like we've really heard the voices and that it really is being –

Hon. B. Ramsay: Children in care.

Mike Henthorne: Yeah, we've talked with children and youth in care directly and people who are using our services, so we do feel like those voices are heard and represented in this legislation.

G. McNeilly: What I heard was in the Native Council, MCPEI, and then the consultation process was open.

Mike Henthorne: Yes.

G. McNeilly: I don't know. As someone who has to vote on this, I don't know if that's far enough. Did you contact the Black Cultural Society? BIPOC USHR? Dante Bazard, who is supposed to be in the Premier's office to look at this through a culturally sensitive lens? Were those three people consulted?

Mike Henthorne: As Jill said, this was open to the public. If they didn't identify themselves as members of any specific groups, we're not sure if we can answer that. But it is/was a really open and engaging process. It really is introduced on a strong foundation. This bill has heard from many different voices. It is brought forward on the backdrop of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, and we have been very conscious of those legislative guidelines in every aspect of this draft.

G. McNeilly: I'll ask this to the minister specifically: Did you contact Dante Bazard about this bill? It's your bill, minister. Did you contact Dante Bazard, who's the anti-racism policy person in the Premier's office? Did you have a conversation with him about this?

[2:45 p.m.]

Hon. B. Ramsay: No, I did not, but I know that staff had reached out to many organizations and stakeholders. I was in on many meetings, of course, where I received lots of information on who would have been at the meetings. Of course, like you say, there were people there who didn't identify themselves. I just feel that they were in depth with their research and communication with the community.

Mike Henthorne: I was just going to say, Jill and I are both social workers. We come from a very passionate place where we want to help and support every member of the community. We are really committed to ongoing discussions with all key stakeholders. Definitely, the next part will be engaging in many different stakeholders around the development of regulations,

which are key components to go hand in hand in the really frontline nitty-gritty of the work we do every day. I can say without a shadow of a doubt that I am committed to reaching out to every possible stakeholder I can to make sure that those are strong.

G. McNeilly: I know you both and I speak very highly of you, but while the bill is on the floor here now, I have a duty to ask these questions because they're the questions that I get asked. When a kid in care is Black or coloured or somebody in care, the families come to me and ask these questions; it's difficult. I want to make sure that we have reached out to people because the bill is on the floor right now.

We just went through this with another bill that was on the floor, the *Mental Health Act*. In our systems, visible minorities and marginalized people don't always understand how to read this. I don't really understand how to read this. I'm doing my best and I made that clear with the last act. I don't know if we have, and I'm just disappointed, minister, because the person in the Premier's office is there to look at current and existing legislation and to consult about legislation that's coming to the floor. The *Mental Health Act* wasn't done well enough.

This act, I mean, I know it's a good bill and I know it's very important. It has not been through that lens. I'm just asking you again, why was this not done with you, or was it done with your colleague beforehand if it was such a long process? There are four other ministers before you. Has anybody reached out to that person?

Hon. B. Ramsay: It's just not that person, member. It's just not that person. We have many different nationalities living here now. There are many different people who we could have contacted. There could be 15 different nationalities that we could have contacted that would live a different way, maybe, than we do, a different culture, different – so, when we open the doors for people to come in, that meant everybody's welcome to come in and share. You know, a child is a child.

There are different cultures that we would be thinking that we would love to engage with, but I mean, these folks had set the

engagements up. If people came in, that was wonderful, but to go and seek maybe 15 different cultures out, that's very difficult. I know you're speaking for yourself and I appreciate that, but there are many, many cultures that I think we could have contacted. That would have been a challenge on its own, if folks weren't coming to the meetings that were open for the community.

G. McNeilly: You just said there are many different people that you could have contacted, many different cultures you could have contacted. I don't know why they weren't contacted.

Hon. B. Ramsay: Well –

G. McNeilly: I mean, your statement just does not make any sense.

Hon. B. Ramsay: Well, I'm sorry that it doesn't make sense, but what I'm trying to say is that we live in a world now where there are many cultures here. To contact every different culture and who – I guess that's something that maybe, as you say, when the act – maybe make an amendment, have people come and have different ideas. Everybody's going to have a different way.

[2:50 p.m.]

I think what the folks did here was try to make the best way, put the best act together, and the Child Advocate was involved in this, so he knows what was done, in working together with him. I think we put the best possible legislation together for the children, the best interests of the children.

I'm sorry that maybe it didn't make sense. Does it make any better sense?

G. McNeilly: No.

Hon. B. Ramsay: Okay.

Chair: Minister, I have a request for an intervention from the hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action. Are you okay with that, minister?

Hon. B. Ramsay: Sure.

Hon. S. Myers: We're just on the drafting of a bill because I think we're getting convoluted in how it happens.

Dante doesn't work in the Premier's office, number one. Dante works for Executive Council, which is Cabinet. Everything goes up to Executive Council to be approved, so everything goes through that office. Whether he puts his eyes on it or not is a determination of the whole structure of Executive Council. Then that goes to CCOP, which is a committee that's run by Executive Council, which is the Cabinet Committee on Priorities. It goes through another set of eyes there, which is made up of Cabinet ministers.

Not to oversimplify the process, but the process is more complicated than you are portraying it. It's not a private member calling up legal counsel and saying, "Hey, could you write this for me? Great, thanks. I'll take it and run it over to the Legislature and debate it." It's actually quite cumbersome and it goes through numerous stages of drafts, as well as it goes through the Executive Council office.

Every single draft goes through the Executive Council office. Is that fair? Dante may or may not be the person. I don't know who all the people are, but there's a whole wing there full of people. Different ones would have responsibilities to look at it through different lenses for a variety of reasons before it makes it here.

I think just to clarify how it all happens.

Chair: Thank you, minister.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West
Royalty.

G. McNeilly: I know, but that position and the job description is specific to do that, minister. That statement doesn't make much sense when we've got two acts and very little consultation with them when they're there to try to make this better for the future.

Hon. S. Myers: You don't know that they haven't been consulted. You're just making that up.

G. McNeilly: That's why I asked the question, minister.

Hon. S. Myers: I just told you, it went to Executive Council, so whether Dante saw it or not is irrelevant.

G. McNeilly: So, you're telling me that everything goes through Executive Council.

Hon. S. Myers: (Indistinct) He works for government. He doesn't work for you.

Chair: Order! Order!

Members, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty still has the floor.

G. McNeilly: So, both of you are making no sense. We've got two Cabinet ministers making no sense. Fifteen –

[Interjections]

G. McNeilly: – 15 – who has the floor? Who has the floor?

Hon. S. Myers: You don't understand how it works.

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

G. McNeilly: I know how it works very well, and I know where he is and what he's doing and what he's supposed to be doing. He's doing your job. You're handcuffing him.

[Interjections]

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, you have the floor. Do you have any questions on section 2?

G. McNeilly: Yes, thank you. We just found out it was too hard to go to 15 or 16 different groups to talk about – it was too cumbersome to do that.

Hon. B. Ramsay: That's not fair to say.

G. McNeilly: Well, that's what we're talking about. Minister, then I'll ask a simpler question. Did you go to IRSA, which represents newcomers and many different people, many different people who come to Canada? IRSA would be the place that would have the information to give you some advice. Did you consult with IRSA on this bill?

Mike Henthorne: I guess if I can answer that, we work with IRSA and BIPOC every single day, our frontline child care protection workers. We work collaboratively. We hear their voice. We hear what is needed.

I guess I'll stick with the member's response to that, but really, I know that this bill is coming forward with a really strong involvement and voices heard. I can't imagine anything that – but I look forward to, maybe, answering those specifically as we get into maybe the weeds of it a little bit more, because really, the voice of children is heard for all children. The voices of collaborative work are in there. Really, the paramount best interests of the child are there that consider every aspect of their life.

G. McNeilly: Is there anybody else on the list for this section?

Chair: There is not, no.

G. McNeilly: I'll be able to talk about that further. I'm just trying to figure out the best interests of the child and we're looking at that. I understand. I appreciate the guests.

“The child's sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression”; the best interests of the child. Can you define that? Where is that defined?

[2:55 p.m.]

Mike Henthorne: It's much like the other ones. It's broad for a reason, and it speaks for itself. The child's sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression must be considered when determining what is in the best interests of the child. It speaks for itself.

G. McNeilly: But do you think we need to define those terms?

Mike Henthorne: We reviewed it with Legal Services and our legislative writers and it's very purposeful in that description, that definition. We're very confident that that will be very helpful and a step in the right direction for the improvements that we see in this act.

G. McNeilly: Okay. And then under (m), “any other factors prescribed by the

regulations.” Obviously, we don’t have the regulations yet, so what can we expect to be in the best interest of the child in regulations that wouldn’t be in here?

Mike Henthorne: That’s an area that we’ll be engaging with the advocate, every stakeholder, as well as children and youth directly to spell out anything else that needs to be considered.

G. McNeilly: Would you foresee those being – or is that just in case you need to change? What do you foresee that...?

Mike Henthorne: Certainly, like you said, if there is an area such as subclause (k) that you mentioned, that if there is some ambiguity there or something that needs some really stronger language, we can look at that in regulations.

G. McNeilly: Thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Section 3: Child in need of protection

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

For section 3(3) and then 3(5), I know that there have been calls for educational neglect to be a part of this legislation under the definition of neglect, and I’m wondering why we don’t see that here. I know it’s something that Newfoundland – for example, since COVID, that’s something that’s really come to the forefront for them.

Mike Henthorne: In section 3(3)(b), it does say “failure of the parent or other person to meet the emotional, social, cognitive, educational or psychological needs of the child.”

K. Bernard: I did not notice that there. In that, I know that up until this point, it’s been a very challenging thing to deal with because there wasn’t really anything that spelled this out.

Let’s say I am a member of a school; I’m the teacher, or whatever, counsellor. I’m calling Child Protection to say this child has been

out. Does this give you more teeth than you had before, to follow up on that? Is that something that you could follow up on before? How is this different?

Jill Hume: Currently, education is not spelled out at all in the *Child Protection Act*. This absolutely would give us some more teeth, using your language, to be involved. If a teacher, guidance counsellor, principal or whoever calls us and makes a child protection report, it would be the job, the duty of our intake assessment unit to gather information regarding any reasons why that’s happening.

We are all aware of situations where parents do everything in their power and their ability to get their children to school, and for mental health reasons or other reasons, it’s just not in the cards for them, but in situations where the parent is unable to get their child to school because of their behaviours or lack of behaviours, the parent’s behaviours or lack of behaviours, this would give us the authority to be involved in those situations.

K. Bernard: I’m good. Thanks, Chair.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Section 4: Family intervention plan.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

I’m wondering why there’s no clause that mandates that the plan must be explained to the child and that the child needs to be involved here. I’m wondering why that’s not part of that.

[3:00 p.m.]

Mike Henthorne: Those specific points are raised in other sections, and they apply to this section. When we reviewed that with our legislative writers and Legal Services, it didn’t need to be repeated again here because it’s repeated in other sections, such as section 8, the child’s right to be heard and involved in their decisions, and also in the child in care rights. So, repeating it again in this section wasn’t necessary.

K. Bernard: Were children involved in that plan in the former legislation? That was just kind of informal question that I had.

Mike Henthorne: Yes, children are involved in the family intervention plans. To be honest, I'm not sure if I can speak to exactly – I know in practice, we involve the child and youth in the development of those plans, but off the top of my head, I'm not sure if it's specifically mentioned in our present *Child Protection Act*, but it is really clear in this act.

K. Bernard: Thank you. I still have some more questions, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you. I appreciate that.

I'm wondering why there's no clause specific to in the case of an Indigenous child. I know the child and youth wording suggestion was, in the case of an Indigenous child, the importance of respecting, supporting, and preserving the child's Indigenous identity, culture, heritage, spirituality, language and traditions. I have a feeling I know what your answer's going to be for that.

Mike Henthorne: If you want to answer it yourself, that would be fine with me. No, but I would say that section 7 ties in every aspect to the federal legislation, so it's not required, or I've been told, legislatively appropriate to mention it again because it goes without saying that everything is tied to the federal act which really spells out everything.

Was that what you were going to answer?
Yeah. [Laughter]

K. Bernard: I still have some more, if that's okay.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: As I was asking the question, I knew the answer, but I had to go through with it and finish it.

The Child and Youth Advocate also suggested that there be a specific mention that this plan must be in the best interests of

the child section. I'm wondering why that wasn't included there.

Jill Hume: The best interests of the child is a paramount consideration of all areas of the act. Like Mike previously said, we don't need to repeat that in every section of the act. It needs to be applied to every single section of the act, including Family Intervention Plan.

K. Bernard: The Child and Youth Advocate also suggested that the plan include educational, recreational, and developmental considerations. I'm wondering, do we see that here, or is that, again, a bit redundant?

Mike Henthorne: Well, it's well said, but you're right, the answer would be the same. It is already considered in other aspects of the act which apply to this section.

K. Bernard: I'm good for this section, Chair.

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

G. McNeilly: The family intervention plan: Does differ in any way from the previous act?

Mike Henthorne: There is a section in our act right now that does outline the family intervention plans. Specially, I don't know if I can answer that right off the top of my head, but it is really clear in this section around what the aspects – and we believe that – you know, we heard from staff, we talked to the judiciary as well, and it does define it much more clearly, I think is the only thing I could say at this point.

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

G. McNeilly: Sorry, Chair. I just got distracted by a fellow (Indistinct)

Chair: I find that happens too, hon. member.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Wants to speed up this important legislation that's very important for children.

"An estimate of the time required to achieve the purpose of the services or interventions," an estimate of those times. Can you tell me what the estimate range is, or how long these normally take?

Mike Henthorne: There's no normal. Every family is unique, and the intervention plan would be determined working with the family. That depends on availability of services and what the depth of the issues are and how complex the situation is.

[3:05 p.m.]

G. McNeilly: On average now, how long do the plans take? Do you have that data?

Mike Henthorne: It's so broad that we wouldn't – we have 3,000 child protection reports a year, with many, many interventions. Some last for a couple of hours and some can last with significant involvement from the court. Quite a lengthy, extended process.

G. McNeilly: I know your staff go through the system problems where you can't get court time. Is that a problem in Prince Edward Island right now? Is that a problem that we're ready to go but we have to coordinate through a few different systems or people? Is human resources a problem to develop a family intervention plans?

Mike Henthorne: You mean within?

G. McNeilly: Yeah.

Mike Henthorne: Definitely, workload is high, and we're stretched most days, but we have a pretty talented group of individuals that are dedicated. Our job right now is to try to improve the supports and we come to work every day with a goal of helping front-line staff do their job more effectively. That's helping connect them to outside services that may be able to help, but also our internal clinical services that we're trying to beef up and offer a lot of programs, like Triple P, like our life skill programs for youth, and all of the direct family work. So, we're building up our internal resources as well.

G. McNeilly: In the Indigenous community, they use something – I'm thinking about somebody that might get a Gladue report. Gladue reports are reports that are specific to MCPEI and the Indigenous communities.

How do you use the Gladue reports in determining a family intervention plan?

Mike Henthorne: It's probably a little bit later if you want, but specifically I would reference the collaborative approaches section of our act that allows us to use Indigenous practices and customs and ceremonies to bring families together to resolve the child protection issues in a collaborative way and put the child in the middle and create plans surrounding that child.

G. McNeilly: But is that something that you have access to, to make your decisions now for this? Would you have access to the Gladue reports to make that decision? There are no privacy restrictions on that when the best interest of the child...?

Jill Hume: Within our powers of investigation, we're able to gather any of that information to guide our work, to develop our plans. So, yeah, we do have the authority to gather that information.

Mike Henthorne: And we do.

G. McNeilly: Thank you.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Section 5: Child and temporary custody of Director or other person.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

B. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

It's great to see you guys here today, finally with this bill on the floor, getting it passed. It's such a momentous occasion for the province. Thank you for all of your hard work on this. It was about compromise in some cases, and I think you found a good solution.

My question on this section; one of the things I'm most excited about in this act is the temporary custody orders that can be given. Of course, one of the programs that'll

help with is the alternate care provider program. I was wondering if you can just outline what this means to an alternate care provider or a grandparent raising grandchildren to be able to have this temporary custody order from the director.

Mike Henthorne: Thank you for that. This is a big deal. This is a big help. We've heard from grandparents and family members who are caring for children in their home that were required to leave their parents' care because of child protection issues and concerns.

[3:10 p.m.]

This allows for a transfer of custody and guardianship, either temporarily or permanent, to another person other than the director. In our present legislation, that can only transfer to the director, to Jill and I, to be the legal guardian of the child. But with this act, it will allow those grandparents and family members caring for children involved with child protection to be the temporary or permanent legal guardian.

That's a big deal. We know for sure that grandparents are excited about that. That'll allow them to sign consent forms, seek medical treatment, get passports, be able to travel with the children in their home, and for the youth and children to have some permanency.

We're really pleased that that's included, and that's a big deal for us.

Jill Hume: We also know that children do better when they're placed with family, so it's a big deal for the children as well.

B. Trivers: Thank you for that. It's such a huge stride forward. The people in part of that alternative care provider program, particularly the grandparents, are going to be so happy when this is finally passed.

One of the things, though, I know when I was minister, I really wanted to try and solve that second part of the alternate care provider program. I know we've talked about this before so bear with me. I just want to get it on the record here.

There are alternate care providers or grandparents raising grandchildren who

have the children in their care, but there is no child protection issue. They're there because the parents maybe decided that was a better place for them to be, or through some other circumstance, they're living with the grandparents or another alternate care provider.

I guess my question is, again, looking at section 5 here, it does say in section 5(1)(a), they're in the custody of the director or other person pursuant to a temporary custody and guardian agreement under part 3. I can wait for part 3 if you want, Chair, but in part 3 it does talk about the child being in need of protection.

I was wondering if that could be interpreted by saying: "I'm not going to be there for my child." I mean, there's a number of circumstances. An example might be I have to leave the province to go work for long periods of time; I want the child to live with my parents or my brother or sister.

Is there a way to interpret that so that that child can still be part of the alternate care provider program?

Mike Henthorne: The answer is yes if the child was placed there because of child protection reasons, but there are some family plans that this act probably doesn't capture when families make their own plan. But we do have supports for those families in our department, in our greater department. Can we improve those supports? Yes. We'll continue to work with our colleagues in social programs and with our deputy minister and minister to look at how we increase supports to every grandparent.

B. Trivers: Just a final comment, I just want to say thank you, again. I'm glad you found a way to make sure that those people are helped as well. I appreciate it. Congratulations again on bringing this act forward.

Mike Henthorne: Thank you.

Jill Hume: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

T. DesRoches: I had a number of conversations with the minister on this exact

thing. I sat at a kitchen table, one of my residents who is an alternative care provider, and she's very pleased with this when I detailed everything with it.

Once your bill is passed, how long do you figure before she or any alternative caregiver will be able to do the things that they want to do: get a passport, travel with this child?

Mike Henthorne: It definitely would be a priority because we know that a number of children and youth right now are in what I would describe as legal limbo. We are developing resources and supports within our department to help move those forward as fast as we can. But that would be a priority for our department.

T. DesRoches: Perfect. Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Section 6: Purpose of Act.

Shall this section carry? Carried.

[3:15 p.m.]

Section 7: Application of Act in respect of Indigenous children.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

One of the things that has stuck out to me about the former *Child Protection Act* is when I attended a public event; it was a Every Child Matters event on the waterfront. Chief Darlene Bernard was there and she said our current *Child Protection Act* is the equivalent to – I'm not exactly quoting her, I'm paraphrasing her – the current *Child Protection Act* is equivalent to a modern-day residential school, which just knocked all my senses off when I heard that.

The reason that question popped into my head is looking at this specific section, the purpose of section 12 of *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*. I guess this is more of a general question but given this is the section where we're specifically talking about it, it might be a good place to ask it. If not, just let me know. I'm sure that that's not

something that's new to you, that you've heard that before, or some form of that.

What's different in this bill from the previous one? I know there's the federal act, and maybe that covers it. Maybe that does cover it. But I'm wondering what other things we find in this bill to ensure that that's no longer the case with our new act.

Hon. B. Ramsay: I just have to say this: I met with the chief a couple of weeks ago and she was very happy with where things were. The only concern she had was if the children had to be taken away from First Nations, and she was really concerned about how that played out, and of course we had a conversation around that. She was very happy with the conversation.

She didn't mention that to me, but I'm sure she'll be very happy with this new act in place, and that we've made contact with them. My contact wasn't for that reason; it was just to visit the island and say hi and introduce myself. I think she was very pleased with where we were.

Jill Hume: Yeah, I would say that Mike and I have heard similar comments that you have heard, which are incredibly upsetting for both of us, for our staff to hear. What I will say is that we have a very positive working relationship with NCPEI and MCPEI. We have an existing protocol with both Indigenous communities on the Island that we follow, and that is looking at being updated. We have an Indigenous services team that services our Indigenous clients, and we get our authority from our provincial child protection legislation, but the federal act guides our work with all of our Indigenous clients.

Mike Henthorne: And specifically around priority placement and how the federal legislation really lines out what the steps are before you would ever look at a placement outside community or outside a child's culture or home, that is being followed strictly, and we're providing more training to staff every day around compliance with the federal legislation, and as Jill said, enhancing our existing protocols and embedding all of these items into our policies as well.

K. Bernard: I really appreciate that. I guess this question is not really – it's more, I'm thinking, relating to the regulations for this section, but I know that one of the issues we're facing is a shortage of foster families. I'm imagining that it's even more so of a dire situation with Indigenous foster families.

Mike Henthorne: Actually, we've seen a tremendous growth in our Indigenous foster homes. Part of that is that we're engaged with MCPEI and PRIDE programs, and some of it is our Indigenous services team that works within community much more than we ever had before. But we have seen a growth in the number of Indigenous foster homes.

[3:20 p.m.]

But we need more foster parents, period. Any time I can have a little bit of a commercial to sort of say, is there any – to reach out to all – we have an active recruitment strategy for foster parents, and information sessions that are being held every month. We encourage people to attend those and think about being foster parents because it's really rewarding and challenging, but they're amazing.

Hon. B. Ramsay: Good plug. [Laughter]

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you very much.

This is an important section. I like where it's going, but sometimes what we see on paper here – and I'm just thinking about the things that I heard that sometimes we're not always in sync. We're not always in sync with protective services and MCPEI and the Native Council and various things.

What are we doing to enhance that ability here for this section?

Mike Henthorne: Tying our act specifically with the federal legislation really does ensure that every one of our staff are aware and are trained and knowledgeable of the federal legislation and that we're in development of compliance guides and all of those sorts of things to ensure that we're

working really well and under the authority of the federal act and this act.

G. McNeilly: Can you just talk to me a little bit about the training process? How are people trained? We'll just start with that question. I have a few.

[Interruption]

G. McNeilly: Don't worry about that.

Mike Henthorne: Don't worry about that?

G. McNeilly: I'm just singing for a little bit.

Mike Henthorne: Okay, good.

We offer core training that includes the aspects that you're just pointing to now to make sure that all our frontline staff are knowledgeable in the different programs and policies and services and ensure that they have the tools that they need to do their frontline work. Right now, we have a program and policy team that is looking at training, looking at how we improve that and bring it into line with this century of technology where people can do some of that work online.

We brought in – it's called the PRIDE Program, which is an international foster parent and adoptive training program. It does provide online training for foster parents and adoptive parents to make sure that they're aware of all the aspects that they need to be able to do their job.

G. McNeilly: I love to hear that because that's important. It's important to try to allow the child to stay in their communities. It's where they know.

But part of this too is, equity hiring is important. I want to know, minister, what you're doing to provide equity hiring in terms of the social workers that do this work. Is there a program on? Where are our numbers? Are our numbers where we need to get to to be able to provide these words on pages with people around them that look and feel like them?

Hon. B. Ramsay: Well, I think we're certainly trying to – equity is very important within this department. I think our staff are – was that your question, member?

G. McNeilly: Yes.

Hon. B. Ramsay: I think that's something that we – there's no bias. People are hired to do the good work. We've got social workers coming and going, unfortunately. We're working hard on retention. Sometimes there's not a whole lot of choices, but we're doing the best we can. We do have someone now on a recruitment mission. That just happened the other day, so we're working hard towards that.

Mike Henthorne: We have an enormous amount of time and energy spent in recruitment and retention. We have recruitment and retention committees set up within our department, and actually, as the minister said, we just hired a full-time targeted recruiter for social worker positions, and that will include a really good lens of diversity to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our ever-changing clients and families we work with.

[3:25 p.m.]

G. McNeilly: Great. That's good to hear.

Oh, is somebody else on the list?

Chair: One more and then (Indistinct)

G. McNeilly: I have one more, yeah.

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

G. McNeilly: Because we're talking about how we don't have a bias – that's not equity hiring, as we're talking about in there. So, I just wanted to –

Hon. B. Ramsay: Well, no, I guess I just – certainly, the more diverse we can be, the more equal we can be, that's the goal, that's the plan. I didn't want you to indicate that there was, I guess. I was just making sure.

G. McNeilly: I guess my – while we're talking about this bill especially regarding Indigenous children and such, can we look at – and maybe this is just a suggestion – can we look at a program that if people are interested in the field and want to get into this field and maybe don't have the criteria to be able to get there, that we can look at a long-term recruitment plan where people are

interested, bring them in and provide them job shadowing. That's equity. We're trying to reach out to the people who are interested. That's how I guess we develop more of a personal perspective for our communities.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

This is just kind of jumping off where I left off before. Just a quick question, and kind of building on what the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty said, but a different angle.

We were talking about having foster parent homes that are Indigenous. I'm wondering what we're doing to build up – as our population grows and diversifies, this is going to become even more important, so it's something important for us to be considering now especially. Are there any active campaigns happening now to engage with Black, Indigenous, and people of colour communities and individuals to kind of diversify the pool of foster families?

Mike Henthorne: We're working with those stakeholders, the community members, and community service providers every day. Even the exposure that we work collaboratively, hand in hand: we go out to homes together; we are sharing supports and services.

There is much more increase in understanding of our work and different community service providers' work as well. More can be done, for sure. We have a very active recruitment foster care committee and they will include and are including thinking about every possible area to target. We're very committed to that.

I guess I can't answer more than that specifically today without talking to them, but definitely, we're active and open to all of that work.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Section 8: UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

I'm going to mention the Child and Youth Advocate a lot here. One of the things that the office had asked for was provisions, similar to in other acts, to include the obligations of service workers because we know service workers are the ones who are on the ground every day with the children and youth; just to ensure that they kind of understand their role when it comes to being responsible and having the rights of a child in your responsibility, if I'm phrasing that properly.

I know the Ontario legislation includes this and I'm wondering why we didn't include that.

Mike Henthorne: Could you maybe give a little bit more specifics of what you mean?

K. Bernard: For service people who are going to be working with the children, to make it clear their role in what it means to uphold the rights of a child. Like I said, in the Ontario legislation there's a provision – I don't have it right here in front of me – but there is a provision that lays out very explicitly service provider – in whatever term – that lays out their responsibility and role to ensure that the rights of a child are being upheld.

Mike Henthorne: I think in 8(3), respect for rights, "the Director and any other person acting pursuant to this Act shall respect a child's rights under this section;" I think sometimes in other jurisdictions that we were looking at, they may have offered longer points regarding that, but working with our Legal Services and legislative writers, it was clear that, really succinct, to the point. There's no one that's misunderstanding that section.

[3:30 p.m.]

We must listen to what the child's views and wishes are, and anyone who is acting pursuant to this act, all of our staff, all of our delegated Child Protection social workers, must respect the child's rights under this section. It's mentioned in other parts of the act as well.

So, we're feeling confident that that represents what the intent is: to make sure that we're listening to children and incorporate their voice, their feelings, their goals, and wishes into every aspect of our work.

K. Bernard: Thank you.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Section 9: Minister responsible for the Act.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West
Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Thanks a lot.

The director of Child Protection, that's a position that was – and I see 10(1), and then 10(2). Can you tell me how long that position, how long 10(1) was not staffed and it forced us to go to 10(2)?

Chair: Hon. member, we're on section 9.

G. McNeilly: Oh, sorry. What am I thinking? Yeah.

Chair: That's no problem.

Shall section 9 carry? Carried.

Section 10: Director of Child Protection.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West
Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Here we go. I'm having trouble counting.

Section 10 – I'll throw in some French there. I just wanted to say, "the Minister shall appoint a Director of Child Protection;" there was a gap in that position, correct? No? It was acting?

Mike Henthorne: No. Under our existing act, "the Minister shall appoint a Director of Child Protection," and they did that. There was never a day that – this is one of those few pieces of legislation that really is an appointed position or a designated position, so there always has to be a director. Now, that, for this past year, was Jill and myself. You probably would have been copied in on emails that, sometimes it was Jill and sometimes it was me, but we weren't acting.

Specifically, the minister appointed us in those positions.

G. McNeilly: Which one of you was acting?

Mike Henthorne: It was either Jill or myself.

G. McNeilly: Is that confusing? Does that –

Mike Henthorne: We're glad to have more stability. I think our staff deserves as much stability in our department as possible. I think we're providing that. Both Jill and I have worked with the department for a combined 43 years of child protection frontline work. We were, at the time, managers in our respective places, but were often acting director. When the position was vacant, we were named the director to support that, make sure that it was legislatively covered.

G. McNeilly: I'm glad. I know you both. I think that's fantastic. But the problem is that there's no 's' on the end of director here.

Mike Henthorne: Oh, sorry. Let me clarify that.

G. McNeilly: Could that happen in the future?

Mike Henthorne: It wasn't Jill and I at the same time. It was Jill or I that was appointed.

G. McNeilly: Oh, okay. By this, the minister can just move people in and out of that position?

Mike Henthorne: There's a legal process that they can't just – there's a letter advising that has to happen, but we definitely followed the legal process that was outlined.

G. McNeilly: That's an important signatory role and a very important – during the time, there could have been one or another. I mean, these rulings and different things have longevity. Do you find that we missed a little bit of continuity by not having one or an alternative during a period of time?

Mike Henthorne: No.

G. McNeilly: No, that's great. I'm glad that we talked about this because I guess I was

just looking for an 's' and I thought at the beginning that you were both there, so, no. Thank you very much.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Section 11: Administrative review.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

[3:35 p.m.]

One of the things that the Child and Youth Advocate called for in this legislation was to include an accessible and independent complaints mechanism for children and youth, including access to a representative and to an appeals process. If such a thing were in this legislation, would this be the section, and if it's not there – I mean, I do see "review" here – but if it's not there, why it wasn't included in this legislation?

Mike Henthorne: Section 11 of the legislation applies to any person, including the child/youth who was aggrieved by a decision of the director, and we did commit to the advocate that we would be working with his office to outline the specific mechanism that would be further defined in the regulations.

K. Bernard: I'm curious why we would put that in regulations and not in the legislation.

Mike Henthorne: A lot of that is between Legal Services and the legislative writers. In accordance with their recommendations, it was clearly that that level of detail is best suited for regulations rather than outlined in legislation. Other provinces may have different styles, but in ours, to make it as clear as possible, it was recommended that that be part of the regulations and not embedded in the legislation.

K. Bernard: Thank you, I appreciate that. So, children and youth will have access to a complaints mechanism or a process in this?

Mike Henthorne: Absolutely, yes.

K. Bernard: Okay. I do have some more questions.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

This specifically says that a child can request a review. How do you plan to ensure that the information gets to the child in a way that they understand? I know myself, as a 46-year-old woman, reading through this, it might as well be in a language I don't understand. It's so confusing, and things connect in weird ways, and it's not easy for anybody, even the smartest of smarts.

How are we going to make sure that the information that we get to a child is developmentally appropriate?

Mike Henthorne: Sure. You're reading our minds a little bit. We're working with our policy and program team as recently as Friday to develop that in a manner that is child and youth friendly, like having a QR code that sort of is an ability to have that registered. We connect children and youth directly to the advocate's office, so they often, if not all the time, have an individual advocate representative to help guide their voice to make sure it's heard.

Those are the aspects that we're working on. We have big plans.

K. Bernard: That's very exciting. QR codes; that's a good – adults might have a hard time with those.

I almost forgot what I was going to say. I don't know what kind of engagement that you had with the Children and Youth Table during this process, but that might be a neat group to engage for figuring that part out because many of them have experience with the system. That might be a fun project for them.

Mike Henthorne: Yes, that committee, for sure, as well as our Youth in Care Network committee. We had one of our staff members, Delia Tassell, was here for a little while. She's a youth worker who works with all the Youth in Care Network, and they have an advisory committee. Many of those were so excited about some of the aspects of this act that they were going to be here. Four of them have COVID, so they were not able to be here, but they are very much going to be involved in the next steps, including some of those discussions and consultations.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

[B. Trivers in the chair]

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

G. McNeilly: I love that conversation. I just had a conversation with Community Legal Information, and they talked about the same thing, being that the legislation in common – have you consulted with them about potential language in the future?

Mike Henthorne: I guess we'd be happy to, but...

[3:40 p.m.]

G. McNeilly: There were two things that came together, that they're talking about that for bills that don't really affect children, just affect general people. I'll just maybe give you that as a recommendation because they were adamant about just this, and I think they're a great resource, minister.

Hon. B. Ramsay: We're always open for recommendations.

G. McNeilly: Yeah, that's fantastic, yeah.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Part 2: Reporting, Assessment and Investigation.

Section 12: Mandatory reporting.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Section 13. Shall it carry? Carried.

Section 14.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Investigations: then we have it again, where we talked about it before, "the safety and well-being of the child, which may include..." and then a list of different things. Can you just talk about this section for a little bit and just outline it? Do any of those trigger the investigation, or how does this work?

Mike Henthorne: I guess I'd ask you to repeat that question.

G. McNeilly: Well, I'm just looking at – there's a list of – so, "Where, following an assessment, the Director determines that there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is in need of protection, the Director shall investigate the circumstances affecting the safety and well-being of the child, which may include..."

And then, what happens at that point? The director says – just run me through how that works.

Mike Henthorne: You'd be the best to do that, Jill.

Jill Hume: Section 3 outlines how a child can be found in need of protection, the different grounds. Section 14 here describes the information that can be gathered during the course of a Child Protection investigation. So, 14(1) outlines all of the things we would be looking at in relation to the child: physical, mental, emotional, and developmental needs, education, residence. all those sorts of things are criteria that we would be looking at throughout the course of our investigation.

Section 2 outlines more our authority of what we can: things where we would need to interview the child, where we would see the child's residence, interview a parent or any person caring for the child, those sorts of things.

G. McNeilly: I just kept coming back to the word broad, broad, broad. We've got to be broad, but we've got to be targeted. We've got to be able to define some of those things. Have we done that enough, coming back to this section?

Mike Henthorne: I think so, yeah. I think it's a comprehensive list that speaks for itself. The wording was very carefully chosen, very carefully chosen, with reviews with legislative writers and Legal Services to make sure that it's in line with other jurisdictions and that it will allow us to do the work that we need to do.

G. McNeilly: Okay, good. Perfect.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Section 15. Shall it carry? Carried.

Section 16.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

I think that we can all agree that when a child is placed in this situation, that it's very important that they understand why they're being placed and that they are being placed because it's in their best interest.

So, notwithstanding any other provision in this section, a plan of care for the purposes of this act shall not be effective unless (a) the plan of care has been explained to the child in a manner appropriate to the child, and (b) the director has considered the view of the child.

Sorry.

Hon. B. Ramsay: I'm not sure where she is. Can you find it?

No, we're not sure where you are.

Chair: Sorry, member. What clause are you reading?

K. Bernard: I am in section 16. Is there anyone else on your list?

Chair: No, not at this time.

K. Bernard: Okay, I need a second to gather myself here and I don't have it. I guess I'll put it this way: Is there anything in here, given I'm a bit mixed up, where they are explained, why they're entering in, and what's that?

[3:45 p.m.]

Mike Henthorne: Sure. In 16(2) is collaborative approaches, so specifically when you look at the definitions of family group conference and mediation, they're included in those. That was a suggestion and a recommendation coming from the advocate's office to make sure that the child and youth are part of those conferences that can happen to come up with plans that meet their safety needs, and that they are in agreement with and part of. That way, their

voice is heard in that section. I hope that answers...?

[S. MacEwen in the chair]

K. Bernard: It does, and I see now where I went wrong. That, what I just read, was what came from the Child and Youth Advocate as hopeful wording to be in here and it wasn't worded exactly like that, but you've captured the spirit of that in here?

Mike Henthorne: Yes. That's what we feel, yes.

K. Bernard: Yes, okay. I'm good for that section.

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

G. McNeilly: The collaborative approach, we talked about that at the briefing. I think that's new in this legislation versus the old.

Mike Henthorne: It's definitely expanded a great deal. That's a key component that we wanted to highlight to everyone, that it's preventative and early intervention, and those are the two areas that we feel, and our staff are asking for, and families are asking for, to help earlier and to prevent children from coming into care or prevent them from being hurt. That's how you bring families together, and it's an area that our department is excited about, and we'll have a whole model that we unfold (Indistinct)

G. McNeilly: So, is that going to increase the volume of using this, and do you think that we have the necessary resources to expand this approach, which we want to? What I'm worried about is that – I want to see it sped up.

Mike Henthorne: Absolutely. We know that we need more resources and we specifically have a plan to have people doing this work within our department. We have a model that's being used really effectively in New Brunswick, and New Brunswick has been over to provide training and leadership and policy manuals and all of those sorts of things. We don't have to reinvent the wheel because it is an area that is working well in New Brunswick and it will work well for us, but we need extra resources, and we have a commitment from

the minister and deputy to ensure that we have all the appropriate supports in place.

G. McNeilly: So, that process will be internal to your own department?

Mike Henthorne: It'll be internal with our own department, but a separate group, and not just embedded within Child Protection; it will be outside Child Protection, but within our department.

G. McNeilly: And there's no such thing now in Prince Edward Island. Because now, we're talking about when you have something internal, you have to be careful.

Mike Henthorne: Right now, we don't have any family group conference coordinators or immediate response coordinators or social workers, but we will, and we have a very concrete plan on how we get there.

G. McNeilly: Okay, perfect. Is that something we should and could expect in the next operational budget? Are we that close to putting this in place?

Mike Henthorne: Dare I say yes, it has to be. (Indistinct)

G. McNeilly: Exactly.

Unidentified Voice: Ask her the question.

G. McNeilly: Oh, I should have asked the minister.

Mike Henthorne: That's right.

G. McNeilly: This is positive. The only thing is that I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't make sure that that was an independent process with no communication amongst the department members when they're working with this. It has to be independent, and when we do that in departments, it's very small. So, I like hearing that.

The only other question: I guess you put the definitions in here instead of the main ones because it's only relevant to this section? Yeah, exactly.

Mike Henthorne: Yes.

G. McNeilly: Okay, well, I'm looking forward to seeing this, and maybe asking the minister some surprise questions.

Hon. B. Ramsay: Oh, you're full of surprises.

G. McNeilly: Thank you.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Section 17.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

In this section, the director can enter an agreement with a youth for supports and services. Why can they not enter into an agreement for the admission of care?

[3:50 p.m.]

Jill Hume: We have consulted extensively with legal counsel about this. A youth does not have custody and guardianship of themselves, so they can't transfer custody and guardianship. In saying that, if a parent is not in a position to voluntarily transfer custody and guardianship to the director, we would never leave any child of any age in a situation where they're at imminent risk of harm, and we would approach the courts for the courts to order custody and guardianship to the director.

K. Bernard: I think that makes perfect sense. Thank you.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Section 18.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just wondering why there's no provision in here that requires the child to be involved in this process or decision-making process.

Mike Henthorne: I guess we would speak to the same reasoning before as in other sections: their voice must be heard and considered. That would apply to this section. It doesn't specifically have to be said again because it's mentioned in those other

sections, section 8 specifically, that it must include consultation, involvement, hearing the voice of the child and the child's wishes and opinions of that. It's already part of that, we have to follow.

K. Bernard: I understand that makes a lot of sense for much of the act, but when I consider that, I don't know if that is clear enough. I mean, we specifically laid it out in other sections that children were to be involved. This one here, again, legislation is hard, but after reading it in other sections, I would take that at, reading this section, that the children aren't involved in this process. Do you know what I mean?

Mike Henthorne: Yeah, I understand your point and that was considered, but advised by legislative writers and Legal Services that it would be not necessary to include again in this section.

K. Bernard: In that, I kind of am anticipating your next answer, but to get it on the record...

Mike Henthorne: Sure.

K. Bernard: ...there's not even a requirement in here that the temporary agreement be explained to the child in a manner that is developmentally appropriate. Is it the same reason that's not included?

Mike Henthorne: We'll probably get into this section a little bit later, but when there is court involvement for any temporary custody and guardianship arrangement, we remove the age limit for a child that can be appointed legal counsel. This way, in our present act, only children 12 years of age and older can be appointed a legal counsel when they're involved in the Child Protection court matter.

In our legislation, we removed the age limit. That way, any child, no matter what age they are, courts can determine that, and can appoint them legal counsel. In that way, we are making sure that their voices are heard and are part of any decision-making that affects them. We feel like that is an aspect that is considered throughout this entire piece of legislation, yes.

K. Bernard: This next one, I'm going to ask it, but I know the answer because, also,

there's nothing in there that these decisions be made with the best interests of the child in mind. That is to go without being said.

Mike Henthorne: Absolutely.

K. Bernard: I guess my only thing to that, to the former question about children not being involved, I guess is something that I hope that the department will keep their eyes on just because if that is interpreted incorrectly, it has some pretty negative consequences. So, just to keep an eye on that, I guess, would be my –

Mike Henthorne: Yes. I also wanted to point out, thanks to Jill, here – she's quicker at finding stuff in the legislation – that 47(4) on the rights of children in care, that really does probably capture all of your points and concerns. It really is outlined there that a child must be consulted and included in their own plans of being in care.

K. Bernard: Thank you.

[3:55 p.m.]

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

G. McNeilly: Just in the fourth and fifth clause there, the terms of the agreement: “The initial term of an agreement made under this section shall not exceed (a) where the child is under six years of age, three months; and (b) where the child is six years of age or over, six months.”

Where did we have that cutoff line? Is that the standard number across the country?

Jill Hume: Yes, it's a very standard age range, and it is determined based on the child's concept of time. The younger the child, the longer time feels for them. That speaks to the difference between three and six months.

G. McNeilly: And then the next one is renewals: “An agreement made under this section may be renewed for additional terms.” “Additional terms” meaning that they can – terms or term or – it could just keep going?

Mike Henthorne: This would need to follow the earlier section of the act

whenever there was a determination that, for cumulative time in care, those for temporary orders, either voluntarily or court orders, they must follow certain timelines before we need to look for permanent plans. In this section, the terms are outlined in the previous sections about what the longest terms can be for a child to remain in care. It is very clear on that.

G. McNeilly: Perfect. Thank you.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Section 19. Shall this section carry? Carried.

Section 20.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

This question is along the same lines of what I just asked. In the permanent agreement, there's no mention there of the youth being involved in that. That goes without saying?

Mike Henthorne: It's the same answer, yes, but I do refer you, thanks to Jill, to the section of the rights of a child in care. That would include their voice and that their plans be reviewed specifically with them.

K. Bernard: Just a comment, and I think this stems from my own love/hate relationship with trying to get through legislation. I just really fear that that will be misinterpreted, and that children and youth will get somehow left out of a process they should be involved in.

Mike Henthorne: I think this is a really strong piece of legislation with child rights. As the advocate said, it's historic. It is aspirational. The child's voice is loud and clear, and I don't think there's going to be any miscommunication. We hear that voice loud and clear.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair. I'm good.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

K. Bernard: (Indistinct)

Chair: Section 21?

K. Bernard: Section 20. (Indistinct)

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Section 22: Determination of permanent custody and guardianship.

Shall this section carry? Carried.

Section 23: Capacity of parent under 18 years.

Shall this section carry? Carried.

Section 24: Agreements do not limit court authority.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

We just skipped a bunch of sections. My questions might go back a section, if that's okay.

In the current *Child Protection Act*, there's a section on considerations that includes references to the best interest of the child; the need for the child to have the situation explained to them. Looking at the *Child Protection Act* wording, considerations, if we look at 3(a) –

[4:00 p.m.]

Chair: Hon. member, there's no 3(a).

K. Bernard: Under 21?

Chair: Minister, are you okay to take questions under a previously passed section?

Hon. B. Ramsay: Yes.

Chair: The hon. member is asking if she can go back to ask questions on a previously passed section.

Hon. B. Ramsay: Are you sure it's the same answer? Are you sure?

K. Bernard: It's time anyway.

Hon. B. Ramsay: Oh, okay. Yes, sure. I would have been, yeah.

Chair: Okay. I just had to clarify it, that's all.

Hon. B. Ramsay: Thank you.

Chair: Alright, hon. members, it is time to switch to private member time.

Hon. members, can I have your attention please?

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

[Hon. D. Compton in the chair]

S. MacEwen: Madam Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having under consideration a bill to be intituled the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Motions Other Than Government

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

G. McNeilly: At this time, I would like to call Motion No. 63 back to the floor.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Madam Speaker, Motion 63 is currently under debate and debate was adjourned by the hon. Minister of Housing, Land and Communities.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing, Land and Communities.

Hon. R. Lantz: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'll try to pick up where I left off. I could start over just to refresh everybody, but maybe I'll circle back.

Right now, our focus is on providing the City of Charlottetown the application to relocate the outreach centre to Park Street while we're reviewing the programs and services with input from our experts and various stakeholders. I believe we should have that application in to the City by the end of the day, if it's not already there. As of

about an hour ago, it was not, but it's under review just to make sure that we've dotted all the i's and crossed all the t's. It should be there this afternoon.

I know there's a council meeting tonight. There probably will be some questions about whether the application's been received and what's contained within it. I think that we'll have to wait in any great detail until it's reviewed by a planning officer and a report written, recommendation made, and then sent to planning board for review. They will have a thorough review.

We intend to have our staff present at that planning board meeting, which is a public meeting. If possible, we intend to have our consultant, Carlene Donnelly, attending via Teams or Zoom or whatever technology it is they use at City Hall.

I stated earlier in the day, I've also begun contacting so far a couple of city councillors just to have a brief conversation with them and ask them how much they actually know about what's been taking place, what we proposed, how the process will unfold, and just the offer to be here for any questions that they have throughout that process.

[4:05 p.m.]

While that application process is happening, we do intend to begin immediately making some changes to the operations at Euston Street, just based on some preliminary discussions we've had with our partner network and with the operators and with our consultants.

Those would revolve around accountability of the clients there, focusing the services on those that are prepared to be helped because we do know that there is a segment of the people who visit the property that are not necessarily in a position in terms of their mental health or their addiction issues to really take advantage of some of the streams of services that are available to them there. I think that that's important. I've alluded to that here in the House previously that that will be a part of our path going forward, is to narrow our focus on those that can be helped with the services that they need in the right place at the right time.

I think it's important that –

[Interjections]

Hon. R. Lantz: Well, everyone else will have a place in the services as well, in our suite of services delivered by government and by community partners, but I think today in Question Period, the Leader of the Opposition even alluded to the fact that – and I have acknowledged this, I understand that it's a problem, and I've heard it from clients of the outreach centre – that many don't necessarily feel comfortable being there, don't feel comfortable going to the outreach centre for the services that they would like to take advantage of.

There needs to be pathways for individual clients. I don't want to say tailored treatment plans, but everyone has a pathway that they need to follow for success or for what constitutes success for that person at that time of their life and the challenges that they're currently experiencing.

There was a lot of discussion about this early in the summer or throughout the summer, that there was open drug usage taking place on the property of the outreach centre. It's a difficult situation because we were rightly hearing a lot of complaints about open usage of drugs in the streets and amongst the neighbourhood and around the community. I think a decision was made, "Well, if we can contain that here, perhaps we'll cut down on some of that public appearance, public nuisance, public danger."

But I don't think that was a wise decision. It was well intentioned, but eventually, that was reversed because, as I've just stated here, we need to have a safe and welcoming environment for clients of the outreach centre to visit there and feel comfortable accessing the services inside the building. I think that it's important, and I think this is part of our vision going forward, that there be a strict no-usage policy on site at any such premises.

My point is, I think while we're embarking on this process, while we're making application to the City for a temporary relocation to Park Street, some of the measures that we know we can implement to improve, I think we can begin to implement immediately. I think that that process will be underway here shortly.

[4:10 p.m.]

It's also important for us to acknowledge that in this environment, where we've got a real problem with illicit drugs flooding the market in the city, real difficult economic, social, financial times for many people, great change, COVID that really created so many problems, exacerbated so many problems that we weren't necessarily aware of, that we have people who need to access services in our system, but unfortunately, I think what's also happened here, we have to acknowledge that there are also criminal elements that have taken advantage of the lay of the land. We've got people taking advantage of that situation.

Some things are beyond our control. Some of those criminal elements and the open drug use, some of this is beyond our control. We heard at the Birchwood School meeting about this federal directive issued by the Public Prosecution Service of Canada in 2020 whereby prosecutors have been told not to prosecute simple possession of hard street drugs.

When you've got this environment of open usage, impunity, it creates a dangerous precedent here, where you have those that are vulnerable in very difficult situations – unhoused; maybe vulnerable to manipulation and vulnerable to domestic violence at home – and criminal elements interacting with all of these very diverse, complex, personal situations on the street.

The police say their hands are tied. We know they can't arrest their way out of this. That's what they said: "We can't arrest our way out of this."

I've talked about this before. You look at places where what was thought to be progressive policies were initially hailed as being progressive. You take, for instance – I've used this example – Portugal: they were the poster child for decriminalization and steering people towards rehabilitation and treatment. Now, after years of being lauded as an example and a model, they're rethinking everything because the problem is just getting worse. Drug usage is rampant, and most people aren't even bothering to seek treatment if it's available, and it's generally regarded now as a failure. So, there are lessons to be learned.

I've talked about how all of us in here are privileged. We have the opportunity to travel and meet people and colleagues and learn about what they're doing in different jurisdictions. Just in that process of leaving our own province and travelling through other provinces and visiting other cities, you get to see it through the eyes of the rest of the country. I've talked about other examples in here, about Moncton and Halifax, and just how shocked you are to see that this is a problem that extends well beyond our borders here.

[4:15 p.m.]

I was recently in Toronto. I was in the Yorkville area and there's a church there; I believe it's called Church of the Redeemer. There's actually a sculpture out front with a bench, obviously depicting a sick or homeless person on the bench. It was a Sunday. It was reasonably early in the morning. This is an affluent area of Toronto. Literally beside the church, there's a Louis Vuitton store. So, the contrast is extreme.

Early on that Sunday morning, there was a long lineup of obviously very vulnerable people in need in front of that church, lined up right past the Louis Vuitton store where you can blow a fortune on a purse or a wallet or something, some luxury item, while people stood in line on the street in front of the church to get the very basic needs of a simple meal.

As I came back about an hour later, the front doors of the church were finally open and there was a simple card table or something set up with two women standing behind it handing out simple snacks of some sort. The line was slowly moving and people patiently waiting in front of the church.

It's just a sad world we live in when you see these sights. Believe me, being in this role for the first few months, I told many people that it just gives me knots in my stomach knowing what an intractable problem it is that we've got to deal with here. It's so new to us and we're learning so many lessons as we go about how best to move forward.

I've talked before here about the City's role in this process. Their role will begin this afternoon if we get that application sent off to them before the end of the day. It may

already be, let me check here. Application sent. Our application has been sent to the City.

When the City's bylaws were created, if you looked at the zoning and development bylaw, as part of their planning process, each zone has a number of permitted uses. The last time the bylaw was updated, the last time they did an official plan and review and developed their bylaws, I don't think they had in mind to explicitly say: "This is where we're going to put our outreach services." No, they didn't.

G. McNeilly: (Indistinct)

Hon. R. Lantz: What's that?

G. McNeilly: It's contaminated.

Hon. R. Lantz: There are a couple of zones where they've actually explicitly said that a permitted use is transitional housing supports, I think it is the way it's worded. However, the exact uses of an outreach centre as defined that we're proposing to – well, that we have been operating and that we propose to operate at Park Street is not well defined in the bylaws. The City has a role to play here, and as I've said previously, it's a land use planning role. We've now delivered an application. A report will be developed by planning staff. It will go to planning board for a recommendation, a full discussion there, and off to council.

Often, the meat of the discussion happens at planning board, and unfortunately, what happens is many councillors don't fully read the report within their monthly council package or they don't quite pay as much attention as they should.

[4:20 p.m.]

I would invite – I think the planning board meetings are open to any members of council who wish to attend. They're open to the public. I would even suggest that that would be a wise use of their time, given the staff and the resources that we'll have there to explain our plan going forward.

But the motion is to release a backup plan.

[Interjections]

Hon. R. Lantz: A back up plan. All we heard until now is: Where is your plan? Where is your plan? Get a plan. Where's your plan? Get a plan. Now, it's, oh, you've got a plan. Now, where's your backup plan? If we had a backup plan, you'd be asking for a backup to the backup.

[Interjections]

Hon. R. Lantz: I can tell you, what they're getting at here with this insistence on plan B, it's not a backup plan they want in case this one doesn't move forward. It's an option. They want an option on the table. The reason they want an option on the table is so that they can play people off those options, so that we can divide people and let them think that it's a choice between this option and that option.

I'm going to circle back to what I was saying about the City's zoning bylaws. There are very few places – take the site on Euston Street now, the former curling club. I'm not sure why, but by some quirk, a curling club was zoned as institutional. To my knowledge right now, the only zone in the city where we could put an outreach centre as of right is institutional.

So, you go look around –

[Interjections]

Hon. R. Lantz: No – I was the chair of the City's planning and development committee. Do you think if I went to them and I said, oh, it's just a drop-in centre, we don't need institutional zoning, it's just a drop-in, do you think they're going say, oh, go ahead, put it in an R-3 zone? No. No, that's not going to happen.

We are confined to an institutional zone at this point. Our plan is to move forward with our Park Street application. It's not institutional, but it is a comprehensive development area. Basically, you can do just about anything you want in one of those zones. But there's a very distinct process that you have to go through that we weren't able to get to until this point.

Hypothetically, if we can't move forward with this, we're back to looking for an institutional zone to go as of right, or we have to ask the City to make a decision

again. So, I don't want to hear any of this "we're backing the City into a corner." They will have a decision to make, regardless of what direction we go in.

What's this plan B that you want? Is it another location? Is it shutting down the services altogether? If you want to be constructive, bring solid, achievable solutions to the table. I'd be happy to hear them.

G. McNeilly: Twenty-four-hour shelter supports (Indistinct) decentralizations (Indistinct)

Hon. R. Lantz: Those aren't backup plans; those are service delivery models. Their issue is the site. I hear the chatter over here. It's not a backup plan that they're chirping at me here. They're making recommendations for how the services should be delivered. We could implement those right now at the current site.

[Interjections]

That's how I started here. That's how I started. I said we will begin making changes to the way we operate immediately.

[4:25 p.m.]

I view the proposed move to Park Street as an interim measure. It will alleviate the stress on a densely populated residential area and a school zone.

That's part 1. That's the first step. He's not going to like this, but the Member from New Haven-Rocky Point, he said we don't actually need a Community Outreach Centre backup plan. We need a properly conceived suite of services. It's in the Hansard. I know what he was saying, and I agree. I agree with that. That's what we intend to do. We intend to implement that over time. That's part 2, step 2 of this process: relocate, renew.

As much as some would like us to throw another option on the table that could be viewed as something viable right now, we don't want to back up. We need to move forward. The first step is to take the pressure off Euston Street. I've acknowledged the suffering that the people in that area have gone through and we can do better. We're in

a position to make that move now and we shouldn't hesitate.

I'm committed to open communication with the City so that they're comfortable with what it is that we're actually proposing. We assume sometimes when we sit around this House, debate these questions, or sit around a Cabinet table, or I sit at a meeting with community partners – I live and breathe this every day. I know more than most people do. Sometimes, we assume that others know more as well. We're not going to make that mistake here. I'm going to make sure that, as we move forward, the City has any of their questions answered.

Taking the pressure off Euston Street, that's not the entire plan. Co-locating the outreach services with the emergency shelter will give us some breathing room so we could focus our resources on redesigning our service delivery model.

We need to ask ourselves: What is the mandate of the outreach centre and is it appropriate?

I said we need to help people who can be helped because it's hard to admit, but there are people out there not ready or able to be helped. There are certain things we can do to support them, to try to keep them healthy and safe and alive, since that is help, for sure. But there are people who find themselves in difficult circumstances, but are perfectly capable, with the right support, of getting back on a healthy, stable track to live in the community and be productive members of our community. We need to be very much focused on those that we can bring back from the edge, from the edge of very difficult circumstances.

I talked about those pathways to services based on the client needs. That's the direction we're moving in: focused, narrowed, tailored to the specific needs of the client.

[4:30 p.m.]

We need to provide, as the Member from New Haven-Rocky Point pointed out, an integrated suite of services or integrated health and social care services. It won't be easy and it's not going to happen overnight, that's for sure.

In the end, the outreach centre may end up playing a much smaller, narrowly focused role in a much larger system. That's, I believe, where we're moving. Many of the services exist in the community, whether they're government services or non-profit services. Where we can do much better is in a coordination role, integrated with all of those partners, and with a much greater sense of urgency of streaming people through those pathways to those services.

I said here the first day we debated this motion that everything is on the table and no one should expect that in a year or two years or four years from now, that anything will look the way it does today in terms of the way these services are delivered, where they're physically located. But I will say they need to be physically located across the whole province and delivered across the province where people require these services.

Regardless of the City's decision, we're committed to hitting that reset button, reviewing and renewing our service delivery model, and if necessary, the outreach centre will continue to operate on Euston Street while we undergo that process, but it would make that process much more difficult. As I said, there is a limited number of options for locating these services. This is the most sensible plan at this time to get it away from Euston Street and to begin that process of renewal to serve the clients better.

It would be unfortunate if we have to go back to the drawing board, but so be it. If we have a backup plan, it's not going to be announced here in this House. So, for all of those reasons, I won't be supporting this motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

B. Trivers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I wanted to rise and speak to this motion because frankly, I think it's just heading in the wrong direction. It's not actually trying to address the real issues, and frankly, I find it a little bit puzzling.

I have a bunch of notes that I've been keeping to speak about here, but I wanted to start by looking at the motion itself. I think this has already been said, but the first clause is: "Whereas the government's recent decision to try to move the Community Outreach Centre appears to have been sudden."

I can tell you this is anything but sudden. I can tell you that the experts within government have been working on this for a long time and have been considering this for a long time. Going back, when is that now, about a year and a half ago when I was minister, I talked to constituents of the community, I understood the concerns, and we were looking at it then, saying: Is this the best place to put it?

[4:35 p.m.]

The current minister just talked about it. When it comes to looking for a location, the first question is: Okay, what part of the province should it be in? Every single expert that I talked to agrees, Charlottetown was the location. When I was minister, they agreed that and I looked at it. We had the one that was around the corner there. Everybody agreed it still should be in Charlottetown.

Immediately, of course, councillors started raising concerns. People like Mitch Tweel came to me and said, "Look, this can't be in my neighbourhood. We don't want it there," et cetera. I said, "Mitch, that's great. I'm listening to you. I understand." We can say it's not in my backyard; you can say whatever you want. This is not something most communities want in their (Indistinct). I said, "But Mitch, you're with the City of Charlottetown. You're a long-time councillor. Why don't you go and put a committee together? If you need funding, I'll get you funding. Why don't you give a location then? You say where you want it to go."

He refused to do that. He wouldn't take the funding. He would not take the proactive steps as a City of Charlottetown councillor to go out and find a solution and present it to government.

[Interjections]

B. Trivers: This is his community.

G. McNeilly: Exactly. What's your point?

B. Trivers: Why isn't he working to help find a place to serve his community members? I mean, here in this House today, we have other representatives that represent this community. I really and truly believe that – well, almost everybody in this House really wants to help this community and wants to see them helped.

But one of the big cries, and it might be in the motion here as well, is having the – there it is – “the Province's back-up plan rely on community consultation and approval.”

Community consultation: The very first thing that I said when we were considering moving the outreach centre – because there was one before – to the location of the former Charlottetown Curling Club was: What does the community think? Do we need to consult? How do we work with that? Obviously, the history shows we did not have a public consultation. I took the advice I was given, rightly or wrongly. Perhaps that was a mistake.

But I will tell you, I'm not sure that any elected representative has ever had a public consultation with their community, including the sitting MLA for the community. I would challenge her to have a public consultation and a meeting with her community because I don't think she ever has, as far as I know.

[Interjections]

B. Trivers: The only meeting that was held, and she's referred to it, was one that I precipitated through my deputy minister at the time at the outreach centre, which she's referred to a number of times with all of the various different groups that formed up the steering committee that ran the outreach centre. I think it's really important –

K. Bernard: (Indistinct) the consultation.

B. Trivers: There we go, we have the admission that the local MLA who serves the community, who is in the community, who lives there and looks after it has refused to have a public consultation or meeting.

She says the government should do it. Why is that?

[Interjections]

B. Trivers: Is she afraid of the political fallout? What is she afraid of? Is she afraid of her own constituents, facing them face to face and realizing what the truth is? I don't know.

She has had a hard time trying to walk this fine line between whether she really believes in helping the vulnerable or playing that political game about ticking people off.

P. Bevan-Baker: Oh, come on.

B. Trivers: She really has. She really has. She's done that. She has been very, very unclear at various times throughout this whole process. And I've got to give her the benefit of the doubt. I think she errs on the side of – she wants to help the most vulnerable. Like I said, almost everybody in here does, although some have said that they want to shut down the outreach centre, which boggles my mind. I think we've heard other people allude to that as well.

If you shut down the outreach centre, what do you do? I think it came up today earlier, maybe it was during Question Period. Was it over 300 people that were served by that outreach centre? There is a need, for sure.

Now, do we have it right? No. I think everybody has admitted that we're still striving to find the right solution, but the fact is we do have an operating outreach centre with some very capable and competent experts who are reaching out to people. Maybe we're not helping everybody exactly the way we need to, but there are people who are being helped. We are trying.

[4:40 p.m.]

This is something that the Premier said multiple times. This is a growing trend, not just in our province but across the country. This is probably one of the greatest challenges of our era in politics as we deal with mental health and addictions issues and the resulting homelessness. And of course, as the Leader of the Third Party always says, it's rooted in trauma. Our government has also listened, and we've tried to take a

trauma-based approach so we can stop that because we want to get to the root cause. What we're talking about is the acute Band-Aid right now.

The Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty always likes to talk about this 24/7 shelter. I have yet to hear him expound on what the details of that actually mean. Out of one side of the mouth, you're saying we can't have people with severe mental health issues together in the same building during the day with people who are just down on their luck and homeless and they're experiencing troubles with finances. But then in the next breath, he wants everybody to live together 24/7.

I think this is very important. I am not an expert in this area. He is not an expert in this area. We need to listen to the experts, and guess what? Guess what? The Minister of Housing, the Premier, and our government have just made great progress in going out and hiring one of the foremost experts in Canada to come and look at this –

[Interjections]

B. Trivers: We are making progress. We are probably going to be one of the leading jurisdictions in Canada when it comes to this.

The former minister, the Member from Kensington-Malpeque, he had a vision as well. This idea of sudden – none of this happens overnight. Some of the experts need to be given some credit here; people like Roxanne Carter-Thompson, who has just been working tirelessly for so many years, decades, really, with this vulnerable population and most recently with the outreach centre.

People like John Horreht with the Canadian Mental Health Association; when it comes that CMHA building, what is it, a 23-unit building, 22-unit building on Prince Street? That's a modular building. He went to Alberta. He made a contact with 720 Solutions. He brought that back to CMHA and he lobbied the government supports to make it happen, and he did, and it's fantastic.

These are the people we need to continue to listen to because that's how we're going to

do it. We're not arrogant as a government to think that we have all the answers. We need to engage the experts, these longtime community members, and we need to listen to them in what they have to say.

I met with 720 Solutions when I was minister and that's where the start of the great solution that the Member from Kensington-Malpeque eventually built at Park Street came from. 720 Solutions said, hey, look, we understand that our new modular units can be on the expensive side; \$350,000 for your 720 square foot building block. But guess what? We've been building these for years and years and we have a whole bunch of them that we've deployed in the far north at oil camps. The oil camps are empty now and they're looking to get rid of them.

That was brought forward during my time as minister, but the deputy minister who ran with it, and then the Member from Kensington-Malpeque capitalized on it and got the Park Street shelter built. This is what you call teamwork. This is what you call long-term solutions. This is how you solve problems like this, by working together.

So, here we are with this motion on the table, and we've got the Leader of the Official Opposition who keeps on saying that he thinks the outreach centre should be shut down.

Hon. H. Perry: As it currently operates.

B. Trivers: As it currently operates. He doesn't have a plan. Speaking of a plan, he doesn't have a plan. He's like: Shut it down as it currently operates. I'm not sure what he wants us to do. If he takes a short look to his right, Charlottetown-West Royalty, he would find a member who cares deeply about the most vulnerable, a member who's been looking solutions, and a member who knows that it can't be shut down and it has to operate because of the valuable service that it delivers.

[4:45 p.m.]

We're a large caucus now of 22 individuals. We have 22 individuals in our caucus. In their caucus, there are three. I challenge them to work together the way we work together with 22.

One of the other things I wanted to talk about was transitional housing. This is another one of the favourite topics of the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty. He always wants to know how come our transitional housing isn't full. "Why are there open beds?"

G. McNeilly: Why don't you have transitional housing?

B. Trivers: Well, we do have transitional housing, but guess what, transitional housing is not low-barrier housing. Transitional housing has requirements that are tied to it. If you're going to be put into transitional housing, you can't be using. You can't choose to use because that's not the purpose of transitional housing; it's to move to that next level.

That is indeed the challenge, of course. It's to take people who are using our shelters, and many who are also using the outreach centre, and find a way to move them to that next level. When I was minister, I took a lot of flak – I was going to say infamous but took a lot of flak – for saying we needed no-barrier housing because we were still turning people away. They were sleeping in ATM machines. When I found that out, I was like: What is going on here? How can we not be providing places for people to sleep?

The sad reality is there are some people who have such tragic problems that they're a danger to themselves, they're a danger to others, and that's why they can't be put in the shelters with the other folks.

So, I was looking for really secure, safe, warm, individual solutions for that to happen, and that's where I was going with that, but this is all part of the housing continuum.

Way back when I was the Minister of Housing, I think as a government we weren't doing a good job of addressing the whole housing continuum. I think the Minister of Housing after me and the current Minister of Housing is doing a great job, understands that, and the department understands that, and some great leadership by a deputy minister as well to address housing, right from those people who need a secure almost cell by themselves because they're a danger to themselves and others,

through shelters, transitional housing, and then all the way up to low-income housing, and then into affordable housing and eventually into...

[Interjections]

B. Trivers: And so, this government is going to be delivering on a strategy, and I know the Minister of Housing is more than up to the task for that with his great experience with the City of Charlottetown. I really look forward to that.

The other part of the equation – and this is why it's so complex, because it has to do with that trauma, mental health issues, and addictions – is making sure we have a pathway for people to get well out of that. It takes a lot of resources; a lot of money and a lot of time. It's not easy.

I wanted to talk about a couple things. One of them is the changes to the *Mental Health Act* that just went through. This is a step forward. I talked about it before, I'm not sure it's a step forward enough, but this is a way, when people really truly are a harm to themselves and others, that we can come up with things like community treatment orders so they can actually get the help they need.

I believe we saw Marlene Bryenton in the gallery earlier today as well. She's going through a classic challenging situation with her son. It's very public; that's why I feel comfortable speaking about it. Kudos to the Minister of Health and Wellness who signed a Ministerial Order to bring her son back to Prince Edward Island.

The concerns are there that the *Mental Health Act* doesn't go far enough and that it won't be able to put him in a position to accept a community treatment order. But this is the balance that has to be struck, and this government is making progress because the new *Mental Health Act* takes that one step further.

[4:50 p.m.]

There's a suite of legislation coming forward from the Minister of Justice and Public Safety department, and this has to do with guardianship and substitute decision-making. Of course, supported decision-making is a little bit outside of that, but

really, it's the ability to help people make the best decisions for themselves. Again, it's a whole spectrum as well; people who truly are harming themselves and others, to people who just need a little bit of guidance day to day. It's easy to try and muddle those together.

I hope that the opposition, whether it be the third party or the official opposition, does not attempt to muddy those waters because they are very different situations, and we really need to have this legislation in place so we help all groups of people.

One of the things as well – and I believe that was brought up today too – is when people come out of addiction treatment, they need a way to get supports so that they don't fall back to their old ways because they don't want to. It was brought up today. If I go back to an outreach centre or the shelter where that same group of people that was my community where I was using, then I'm likely to fall back into that.

This is where I want to give kudos to people who have forged ahead and opened up places like Lennon Recovery House. I want to give Dianne Young a lot of credit. Dianne Young is a firecracker with a vision, and a founder. When people said no, no, no, it can't be done, she made it happen. We all know she's moved on from Lennon Recovery House now, but her legacy lives on there and it's becoming mature.

There is a place where people can go after treatment so they stay well, and in fact, that's a path – Lennon Recovery House, now they're building tiny homes right next to them. So, after people leave Lennon Recovery House, they can actually find affordable rent in these tiny homes with the supports needed as they transition back into full-time work.

This is the pathway that we need. This is the pathway, frankly, that our government is supporting. These are the pathways that our government is helping build.

I believe we're on the right track. Is it happening fast enough? Does it ever happen fast enough? No. If it's your loved one who's living on the street, with mental health and addictions treatment, it's never

fast enough, but I do believe we're on the right track. So, I'm really glad to see that.

I can't really support this motion the way it's written. I do support the Province continuing to help vulnerable Islanders. I support the Province continuing to lobby the City of Charlottetown to step up to the plate and be part of the solution. I support the opposition, whether that be the third party or the official opposition, in working together with our government to help provide solutions to make sure we help our vulnerable Islanders.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Hon. S. Myers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's great to be able to rise and talk about some of these motions that are on the floor. I think I want to touch on a couple things, but I want to first start by saying this.

Across this country and across this Island, we've seen time and time again Liberals play politics with issues of importance to Islanders and issues of importance to Canadians. I think this is another example of a Liberal Party who, provincially, is lost – they don't stand for anything – and a federal party who's about to be lost as well for the exact same reason.

Leave it to the Liberal Party to suggest that you need a backup plan, because they are the party of backup plans, aren't they? Remember the time they were going to go right through a park? Remember, in Strathgartney, they were going to drive a highway right through the park? But they magically had a plan B. They had it. They had a plan B, so whenever the people were outraged, they were like, "No, no, no, we're going to do this one." It was drawn. It wasn't drawn on a scribbler; it was a full set of drawings they put out. They had a plan B, so of course, the Liberal government was a government of plan Bs.

Remember when Wade MacLauchlan was going to introduce electoral reform? He actually got it to the point where he could have done something about it, but he ran

away because his own party members didn't even want it. His plan B was run away, and these guys all followed him.

[4:55 p.m.]

School closures: these guys marched into my community and said they were going to close the Georgetown School twice –

[Interjections]

Hon. S. Myers: Twice –

[Interjections]

Hon. S. Myers: Twice, and ran away both times. They ran away from us both times and went back to Charlottetown where their party is located.

It's not surprising that they only got 12,000 votes in the last election. They're still following the party of Wade MacLauchlan. I must say, I have an interesting quote, and I found it here this afternoon from the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty when he said he was switching parties, because remember he was NDP. He was going to switch parties because he appreciates the direction Premier Wade MacLauchlan is taking the province. He was one of a handful of people who thought Wade MacLauchlan was taking this province in the right – he didn't even win his own seat, but you supported him here. It speaks volumes about what this party stands for today. Surprise: it's nothing.

The member from Rustico, he hit the nail on the head when he said the Leader of the Opposition wants to shut this down but the member from West Royalty wants to fix it. In a caucus of three, most people would think that it should be very easy to go upstairs and figure this out and come down with a unified voice and say, "Okay, here's what we're going to say." But instead, they're like, "Let's just peel a little bit off this side of the apple and peel a little bit off of this side of the apple and call it an apple pie." Well, I don't smell pie over here, I'll tell you that. And I'd smell it.

It's entertaining. I mean, I sit here and listen. It's quite entertaining when I listen to Question Period. I realize this is an issue and I spoke about it here last week. I spoke to

residents in the area over there. I've had a number of conversations about what they'd like to see, what they want, the problems that they're facing, and I appreciate what they're going through over there.

Day after day, the Liberals come and that's their topic, which is fine. It's their decision to make the topic. Perhaps Jeff up there can't write other questions, I don't know.

But you know what, there's lots of other things. When I go, when I leave Charlottetown – and I totally appreciate that it's an issue in the Euston Street crowd, I totally do – when I leave Charlottetown, do not hear, and I can speak honestly when I say that. But there's lots of issues. I get lots of calls about a lot of things in my area.

Hon. H. Perry: (Indistinct) mental health and addictions file (Indistinct)

Hon. S. Myers: Well, you haven't asked a single question on mental health.

[Interjections]

Hon. S. Myers: Not a single question. We're in week 2. Day 1 of week 2, so if it's that important – and perhaps the Leader of the Opposition should leave Charlottetown once in a while. I hear he's tied to his desk upstairs there. I hear he pretty near moved to Charlottetown. Perhaps that's what the Liberal Party needs, is another Charlottetown premier. Perhaps that's what the Leader of the Opposition is lining himself up to be. He's trying to be more like Charlottetown, spending more time in Charlottetown, doing all his chores in Charlottetown, doing all his shopping in Charlottetown, spending all of his time in Charlottetown.

[Interjections]

Hon. S. Myers: Maybe he wants to be the leader of the Liberal Party of Charlottetown because that's, quite frankly, who they are. They're the party of Charlottetown and they always have been and they always will be.

Hon. H. Perry: Blame others. Say nothing. Do nothing.

Hon. S. Myers: Your party. You said it. Put that on your next election platform right

there. You did it. You hit the nail on the head. There's your election platform for the next election, right there.

Speaker: Hon. members.

Hon. S. Myers: "Whereas the government's recent decision to try to move the Community Outreach Centre appears to have been sudden." Appears to who? To you two? Because it wasn't sudden to anyone else. It wasn't sudden to the people over there who have been asking for it to be moved. It wasn't sudden to anybody over here who knows that there has been an enormous amount of work done on this file since we've been in government.

Very hard to believe that it's sudden, unless you're these two over here who, every decision that happens seems to be sudden. They're so unattached to the realities of what it's like to run government because they were so bad at it that they're completely oblivious to how decisions get made.

[Interjections]

Hon. S. Myers: They're completely oblivious to how decisions get made. They talk about Charlottetown a lot here and I guess it's right –

Speaker: The hour has been called.

Hon. member, would you like to adjourn debate?

The hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action, would you like to adjourn debate?

Hon. S. Myers: Madam Speaker, I would like to adjourn the debate please.

Speaker: With a seconder?

Hon. S. Myers: With the seconder, Kensington-Malpeque.

Speaker: Thank you very much.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

M. MacKay: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by Member from Summerside-

Wilmot, that this House adjourn until Wednesday, November 15th, at 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

[The Legislature adjourned until Wednesday, November 15th, 2023, at 1:00 p.m.]