

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Darlene Compton

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The Legislature met 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 my colleagues, all of those who are joined online to watch the proceedings today, and those who are joining us in the public gallery today. Welcome.

I wanted to begin my remarks today by congratulating Chair John Gaudet and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Foundation for a wonderful event Saturday. The Yuletide Gala Auction raised over \$360,000 for equipment for the hospital.

[1:05 p.m.]

A very inspiring part of the evening was when Michelle Hughes of Cornwall, who is suffering from cancer, talked about her experience in Prince Edward Island, and actually acknowledged what she called her table of health care heroes: nurses, physicians, and others who have helped her along the way. It was a lovely moment. I want to thank all of those who participated in the gala and made it another good success.

An exciting today, not just in PEI with the Capital Budget coming later today but the fall fiscal update in Ottawa, as well, which is expected to be heavily focused on infrastructure and housing. I look forward to Minister Freeland's presentation later today. Actually, we'll be heading to Ottawa this evening for meetings following up the fiscal update with Minister Fraser, Minister MacAulay, and Minister LeBlanc. It's been successful in the past to get in front of these ministers in Ottawa as quickly as possible when funding is becoming available to, what I would say, work together on joint initiatives of importance for Canadians and Islanders. Hopefully, we can be successful there.

I also wanted to say that on Friday last, I had the honour to join Minister MacAulay and MP Sean Casey to open the \$90 million mRNA vaccine facility at BioVectra here in Charlottetown, one of the biggest capital investments in the history of our province. I wanted to say congratulations to the staff at BioVectra and to Oliver Technow, the CEO who made this all possible. It will be an incredible add to our growing bioscience sector in this province.

I also had a chance to talk for a brief moment to Regis and Joan Duffy, who are the founders, of course, of Diagnostic Chemicals, the company which is now BioVectra. They started in their garage offering jobs to people that Regis was training in the science sector and it's become one of the largest companies in Atlantic Canada. To Regis and Joan, again, thanks.

Also, finally, I wanted to say that recently at a meeting in San Diego, Lynn Murray, a partner with Key Murray Law, recently received a fellowship in American College of Trial Lawyers. It's one of the most premier legal organizations in North America, and Lynn is the first Prince Edward Islander to receive the fellowship. I wanted to say congratulations to Lynn and thank her for her work in Prince Edward Island and congratulations on this prestigious honour.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's a pleasure to rise today and welcome everyone back to our third week here in the fall sitting. I want to welcome all those who are watching online, those who are in the gallery: both Ray MacKinnon and Alan Sparks. Thank you for coming back in again today.

I want to put a shout-out to a lady in the Tignish area – Tignish North, to be exact – Judy LeClair, who, over the past as many years as I can remember, always bakes a dark fruitcake and she puts it on for different auctions, whether it be the Palmer Road

Parish picnic, the Tignish St. Simon & St. Jude Parish picnic. The one just recently was the Christmas Hampers in the Tignish area.

It's very generous of Judy to do that. I mean, it costs so much now for the cakes. I purchased many of them in the past and I have to use two hands just to carry them. I think people like Judy really deserve to get a lot of recognition for what they do for the community. It's small things to them but it makes a huge difference in other people's lives. Thanks to Judy and thanks for all of those who participate in any kind of these online baking sales and auctions.

I also want to mention, last week, I think I mentioned about getting your snow tires on. This morning was another example of being prepared. Coming in from the west, I hit certain sections and it was really not nice to be on the road. I saw some vehicles slide through intersections. So, get your snow tires out. I had a few of the health care staff reach out to me that were working in the east from the west who were saying, "Where are the snowplows? Where are the snowplows?" Anyway, I gave someone in this room's number, so they might be contacting that person sometime today. [Laughter]

On a very serious note, this week, from November 19th to the 25th, is Addictions Awareness Week. It's something that I've been concerned about for a long time, something that I've asked questions on in this House every day this fall session. More needs to be done to help those who have addictions and those who are seeking assistance. When they reach out for help, it needs to be there. We need to do more to make it easier to access programs and have seamless transitions throughout.

That will be it for today. I just wish everybody a good week in this session. We're back to work.

Thank you.

[1:10 p.m.]

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hello to my colleagues and welcome to everyone joining us in the gallery today. Hello to our Pages, thank you for being back today; and anyone tuning in from all over the Island, in particular those tuning in from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Back in September 1981, four women met for lunch at the Confederation Centre 1964 Club in Charlottetown. At the time, each one of them were distressed by an act of sexual violence that had been brought to their attention that week. Inspired by that moment in time, there has been a play. It's called *Provocation*. It's a play that is a grassroots production paying homage to the women who, through grit, tenacity, strength, and resilience, funded the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre in PEI in 1982.

Provocation is produced by the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre and will be on stage at the Guild in Charlottetown, with performances November 23rd and 24th at 7:30 p.m., and November 25th at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. This play is directed and written by Candace Hagen. The play spans from 1981 to 1997. They do interviews, submissions from over 20 Island sexual violence prevention activists, and there are four fictional characters who weave the story of how strength, revolution, and ferocity formed PEI's first and only rape crisis centre.

And following off the success of last year, the Farmers' Bank of Rustico and Doucet House Museums have announced the return of the Meat Pie Festival, the *Festival du pâté*. The six regional competitions will take place between November 26th and December 16th across PEI. The first-place regional winners in the traditional and non-traditional categories will gather for the grand finale in Rustico on December 16th. To register, review contest rules and regulations, or for more information, you can visit the website: farmersbank.ca.

I wish everyone a good day.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

R. Henderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I do want to welcome all those who are here in the gallery as well as watching back home in the riding of O'Leary-Inverness. I've got a feeling Harvey Collicutt may be tuning in; he tends to be a regular watcher.

I did want to take the opportunity to remind the Premier that the Boston Bruins were very successful on Saturday night against the Montreal Canadiens, winning 5-2. I just wanted to acknowledge that.

The other thing I wanted to mention was that there's a lot of wet ground out there. We had a lot of rain on the weekend, especially Saturday. I know on Sunday, I spent some time just going around my fields trying to see which way the water was running; trying to get the water running off the fields for next year, really. But when you drive down to Charlottetown, you really see the amount of corn and soybeans that are still not harvested in the province.

I don't know what impact that might have on crop insurance and our Minister of Agriculture when it comes to our productivity in growing crops here, but farmers are under a real lot of challenges these days with the extreme of the weather events, and when you get that much rain during this time of year when things don't dry out real quick. I think we're hoping for maybe a quick freeze-up, and I hope that they'll get those crops in before any significant amount of snowfall comes.

While I'm talking about agriculture, I do want to acknowledge once again, more sad news from O'Leary-Inverness. A particular constituent of mine, Jimmy MacWilliam, passed away on the weekend. Jimmy was a longtime farmer in our community and a very avid gardener. I think the last time I visited him, he was out in the garden and he wasn't very well, but he was dedicated to making sure the weeding got done.

He was also a big advocate for a little church in our community called the Bethel Church. It's an old Methodist church, and it's kind of a historic facility and church in our community. He was always good to make sure that that be fundraised.

The other thing I wanted to mention about Jimmy, and certainly passing on sympathies to his wife Margie and his family – Michael,

Scott, and Betty are in my district, but there are some others in other districts as well; Janet and Crystal, I think for sure, and Claretta.

But anyhow, Margie was a longtime returning officer in the Province of PEI. All my election times, she was the returning officer, with the exception of the last election. I think in her 80s she decided to retire. She was also the returning officer during my dad's time, so that just tells you how long Margie was quite active as a returning officer and involved. I always enjoyed the conversations on the history of being a returning officer and the funny stories that happened over the years when it came to returning officers. Jimmy was always very supportive of Margie.

I certainly pass on my condolences to the MacWilliam family during this time of grief.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[1:15 p.m.]

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

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

It brings me great pleasure to rise today and wish everyone in Mermaid-Stratford a great day, along with our gallery guests and my colleagues.

I did want to rise today to congratulate my daughter Emma and her team, U14 Charlottetown-Morley, on the winning of the Montague ringette tournament. It certainly was hard work. They showed lots of resiliency, collaboration, working hard together, and never giving up. It was an overtime win, so it was very exciting.

I just want to say congratulations to them today.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

R. Croucher: Good afternoon, Madam Speaker, and good afternoon to everyone tuning in in District 1 today, especially Shirley Murphy. Shirley tells me she tunes in regularly and likes when I get up to speak.

Good afternoon, Shirley, and I hope you have a great day.

I'd like to send a big shout-out to the Souris Lions Club. They are busy gearing up for their annual Christmas box campaign. Every year, this organization delivers approximately 140 boxes to families in need. It's incredible both the support from the community and the work that the Lions Club does every year to make this campaign the success that it is.

If anyone would like to donate to the campaign, they can drop their donations off to the Souris Credit Union or e-transfer to sourislions@gmail.com.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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'm glad you're all able to make it in despite the bad roads. And welcome to all those in the gallery. It's great to see you.

I know many maybe on your drive in this morning, you may have tuned into CBC and heard the heartwarming story of a young boy out of Digby, Nova Scotia: Joey Connolly. I know some of you are giving me nods. It sure brought some tears to my eyes. Joey is neurodiverse, he has autism, and last year Joey was a victim of bullying. His parents shared on social media that for his birthday, he'd love to receive 100 cards. Well, people all over the world heard the cry, and Joey received over 1,000 birthday cards, including from many Islanders, and including one from our very own Premier.

This year for Christmas, Joey, who has been given the title of Joey the Card King, has decided to give back. This time, he is the one sending out cards. He has already sent out 2,700 Christmas cards across the Maritimes.

I just wanted to thank Joey and his parents for sharing his love of cards, and for giving back. What a beautiful example of community.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Welcome back, everybody, to the third week of deliberations here in the Legislature, and to the folks in the gallery, nice to see you again.

I spent part of the morning at Bluefield High School, where they had Career Day today. It's always a really inspiring day in the school's calendar. I met with a number of students, grades 10, 11, and 12, and the quality of the debate and the questions that they asked was – as they always do, they give me hope for the future. It was a really lovely event. I want to thank Tammi-Jo Auld, who was the coordinator of that, but of course the whole staff of the school was involved in making sure that that ran as smoothly and effectively as it did this morning. Thanks to everybody at Bluefield High School for making Career Day such a great success.

I want to make particular note of the music teacher there, Kirsten MacLaine, who has recently moved to Bluefield High School just a couple of years ago, and the craft fair on the weekend, Friday and Saturday, was primarily a fundraiser for the music program there, and it was a huge success. They always get good crowds, and this year was no different. Congratulations to Kirsten, and again, thanks to everybody at Bluefield High School for welcoming me as they did, and for the great program today.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

B. Trivers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I wanted to rise today and of course say hello to everyone watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald. I wanted to bring condolences to the family of Rev. Barbara Wagner, especially her son, Kyle. She passed away on November 17th, and in fact, I think her wake is happening this afternoon

while we're sitting in the Legislature, and the funeral is tomorrow.

[1:20 p.m.]

Rev. Barb was a friend and a mentor of mine when she was at Central Queens United Church. She had a love of music and a way of drawing everybody in to be part of the community and make sure they took part. She will be sorely missed. She has struggled the last few years, so she has gone on to a better place.

Also, the Rustico ringette team lost in the championship to a sharp-elbowed Emma Redmond, I think, and her team there. [Laughter] They put up a great fight. I think they better watch out. I think they're going to get them next tournament because they're a great team.

I also stopped by the Christmas Craft Fair at Bluefield High School. It was a great Christmas Craft Fair, but it just brought joy to my heart to see the band members singing almost during the entire craft fair. I got there around three in the afternoon on Saturday and they had been literally singing Christmas songs with drums and guitars and harmonies since 10 a.m. They were taking requests. It was incredible. Of course, my daughter Annika was one of those up there singing and having fun.

Kudos to Kirsten MacLaine and what she has done with the band program there and the people that she has inspired to do that. Her popular music program, as well, is really important.

I also want to give a shout-out to all those folks at Career Day. I know Annika was extremely excited. I'm not sure if maybe she went to the Member from New Haven-Rocky Point's session or not.

Anyhow, thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I just want to say hello to everybody watching from District 14 Charlottetown-West Royalty. I want to say hello to Ray

MacKinnon and Al Sparks in the gallery. Thank you for coming by today.

I'm going to talk a little bit more about it; I'm going to bring a piece of legislation forward that talks a little bit about global history. This week, too, is Canadian History Week from November 19th to 25th. This year's theme is the History of Black Achievement in Canada. It encourages Canadians to reflect upon and engage with Canada's past. I just went through, and I just picked out four different things about our Black history in Prince Edward Island. We have some famous Black Islanders:

George "Old Chocolate" Godfrey, first American World Coloured Heavyweight Champion;

George "Budge" Byers fought in two weight classes and became the World Coloured Heavyweight Champion;

The West End Rangers team – some of us might remember them, they were from a long time ago – became part of the Coloured Hockey League of the Maritimes.

Maritimes-speaking, we have Willie O'Ree. He's from Fredericton, New Brunswick, and he was the first Black player in the National Hockey League; the first NHL player to receive the Congressional Gold Medal, the U.S. Congress' highest honour. He's on a postage stamp. I think he played for the Boston Bruins. It's a great day.

Thank you.

[Applause]

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

T. DesRoches: I rise today to talk a little bit about an event that I attended on the weekend. My colleagues from Summerside and I had the opportunity to attend a great event. The International Children's Memorial Place held their fundraising auction and dinner. We heard a heart-wrenching story about one family's loss and how they deal with it and continue to deal with it. That's the theme every year of this auction and dinner. They have someone come up and speak about a loss of a child. It was a heart-wrenching story.

They had a big, big showing. Over 300 people bought seats for it. They had some great volunteers: Sharon, Bernard, Dave, Myra and Bill. There's a whole slew of them out there who do a lot of work for this, and it's a great event. I can say that I had to pull out a little early and I thought I put a pretty healthy bid on probably about 15 items, but I got the phone call the next day and only won one. That was good to hear; that meant that they raised lots.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Statements by Members

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

Challenges for Small Rural Businesses

R. Henderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Rural PEI is seeing small businesses reticent of even considering rural communities to operate because development has become so difficult and housing so scarce. This government lacks the vision on the file, and they are killing small rural communities, plain and simple.

This past weekend, I had a local constituent tell me he wanted to purchase a local small business, but because the commercial purchase of land was three acres, a petition to the Island Regulatory Appeals Commission was required. It turns out the person purchasing the property has personal land holdings, between he and his wife, accumulating a total of three acres, now putting them at six acres of aggregate land holdings.

[1:25 p.m.]

IRAC is holding back the establishment of a small business because a husband and partner have land holdings equaling six acres? Let that sink in for a while. This is not a foreign purchase. This is not someone who just moved to PEI within the last six months. This is not shore frontage. This is a neighbour selling a business to another neighbour in a rural community.

Now, you might say, what's the big deal? No big deal. It's only some paperwork

required to be submitted by a lawyer that only takes a short while. What does that actually mean to a new entrepreneur, going to IRAC? This constituent had to negotiate the terms of sale – that's obvious – was approved for financing with CBDC West Prince Ventures, and left his current job last month to work on opening his mechanical repair business.

After all that, the financier will not release the money for the purchase until IRAC has approved the land transaction. IRAC has informed him that they won't be meeting until December 15th, so he cannot commence opening the business for at least another month; no income, more lawyer fees. An honest Islander looking to provide jobs in a rural community and has no income for the foreseeable future. He is waiting on a broken, misintended system. Does any of this make sense?

It could only be worse if he wanted to actually build a piece on this existing structure. He would then be held up again as he likely can't apply for a building permit until he owns the land, meaning another likely – certainly, in my riding – six months before a building permit would be granted.

I ask this Legislature: Why would anyone want to build or buy in a rural community under this government when the red tape ties you simply up in knots to the extreme purchase of three acres by a local constituent from another? This government is killing rural communities, decision after decision. This Premier seems to have lost his way on common sense in trying to please everyone yet satisfies no one.

When will common sense ever prevail and guide decision-making under this government?

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Faye Doucette – Belvedere Funeral Home

S. Dillon: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise today to recognize Faye Doucette and the wonderful care and support offered by Belvedere Funeral Home. Faye Doucette is a founding partner of Belvedere

Funeral Home. She has owned and operated this business for 30 years.

Faye is a licensed embalmer, funeral director, and certified crematory operator and has served as past president of the Funeral Association of Canada, past president of the PEI Funeral Directors and Embalmers Association, and general chair and director of the Atlantic Provinces Funeral Directors and Service Convention. She is a charter member of the Rotary Club of Stratford and an active member of St. Pius X Church.

The experienced professionals at Belvedere help support people during difficult times by offering a range of personalized services for families to help plan a lasting tribute. It is a space to join with family and friends in grief, to honour their loved ones.

This Sunday, November 26th from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Belvedere Funeral Home, there will be an open house for all to attend and celebrate Faye's retirement.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Winsloe.

2023 PEI Curling Hall of Fame and Museum Inductees

Z. Bell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise today to recognize the recent 2023 PEI Curling Hall of Fame and Museum inductees. The 15th PEI Curling Hall of Fame and Museum induction ceremony was recently held in Cornwall. The inductees were the Suzanne Gaudet junior team, the 2001 World Junior Champions; as well as curler/builder Arleen Harris and curlers Sean Ledgerwood and Janice MacCallum.

The 2001 world champion team consisted of skip Suzanne Birt, third Stefanie Clark, second Robyn MacPhee, lead Kelly Steele, alternate Carol Whitaker, and coach Paul Power, who were among the inductees.

I'd like to specifically recognize two of my constituents: my neighbour, Suzanne (Gaudet) Birt, and Stefanie (Richard) Clark. Suzanne Gaudet won five consecutive PEI

Junior Women's Curling titles which started in '98 and finished in 2002. In addition, they also won two Canadian Junior Women's titles, a World Junior Women's Championship, and also a World Junior bronze title.

In the 2001 gold medal game at the Canadian Championship, Team Gaudet defeated Saskatchewan. Team Gaudet then proceeded to win the World Junior Women's Curling Championship in Utah. Stefanie Richard was awarded the sportsmanship award at this tournament.

I do want to just personally congratulate all of the inductees on this prestigious honour.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[1:30 p.m.]

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. E. Hudson: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

On Friday, November 17th, the Member from O'Leary-Inverness requested information on sand procured by the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure. After an open and competitive tender process, sand contracts are awarded to successful bidders on an annual basis.

The company referred to in the member's questions is one of nine contractors across the province that were successful in the public tender process between 2019-2020 through to 2023-2024. Over that time period, the contractor has supplied an average of 19 percent of sand to the department in the past five years, and this year's supply is already completely under contract.

Thank you.

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

A question for the Premier. In the Speech from the Throne delivered only six months ago, the government said a centralized site with wraparound services would be created for homeless people.

Providing supports for unique challenges

Question to the Premier: Where is the government planning to build this wraparound site?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Well, I think, Madam Speaker, we've talked about this for two straight weeks now in this Legislature. Our plan is to try to relocate the services on a temporary basis to Park Street from Euston Street because we all agree that Euston Street is outgrown and is the wrong place for these facilities.

Then we're going to embark on a process with the City, the Province, some of our NGOs, and some interested and engaged citizens to come up with a long-term plan for these services which are sadly needed in our province, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The speech also says that a centralized site for homeless people will also serve people with mental health and addiction problems.

Will the Premier please explain why his government believes that people with mental health, addictions, and homelessness challenges should be all pushed together into one centralized site?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Well, Madam Speaker, I think there is a lot of connectivity between those who suffer from addictions, who also suffer from mental health challenges, and have challenges with homelessness.

I think it's something that I believe every jurisdiction knows there's a connectivity component to that, but I do think our process will need to include how we can best serve everybody. Whether or not that needs to be at one specific location, or it can be shared throughout communities or throughout our province, I think that's something that will be part of our long-term plan as well.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Unfortunately, this idea of a centralized site is a major flaw in this do-nothing government's plan. Rather than treat people with sensitivity and nuance, there seems to be some sort of plan to force dozens of people facing significant challenges into one single place.

My question for the Premier: Can your government not understand that it is deeply unfair to expose people with unique issues to all the challenges that government appears incapable of addressing?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Well, Madam Speaker, I don't quite understand the question, to be honest.

I think that government realizes that we need to try to do the very best we can to help all of those Islanders who are in need of services, be they from addictions, mental health challenges, homelessness, and the variety of other societal challenges that we face. That's what we're trying to do. That's what we'll continue to do.

Again, as I said last week, I will not take the approach from the Leader of the Opposition and close the services and do nothing. That's not what we're planning to do. We're trying to do the best we can to work with our partners to provide these necessary services in our province.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Madam Speaker, that's exactly the point. He doesn't understand.

This Premier does not understand that you can't put all of these needs in one spot. You can't have people who are trying to seek help for addiction recovery, or get off addictions, into a site where people are using.

I know of an individual who presently is recovering. Recently, that person experienced a brief period of homelessness. They told me that they simply cannot recover if their temporary shelter is right beside an area where drugs may be used.

[1:35 p.m.]

So, what does the Premier say to that person? How can he possibly claim to care about vulnerable people when his government appears to have zero understanding of the individual challenges that people face?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

To be clear, I understand the issue. I didn't understand the question because it seems to me in mid-stream, he's trying to change his approach. After thumping the table for two weeks to close Euston Street, now he's trying to appeal to others to say we have to look after people, which is what our government has been saying from the very beginning, that we can't not offer these services to individuals. We have to offer these services.

We obviously need to do a much better job, but we have so many wonderful NGOs and government officials who are working hard and doing a good job providing services. There are gaps in services that we need to provide. We're working to address those, but the option isn't to close it and to do nothing, which this member and his party have been lobbying for since the beginning of the session.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'll say it again. I've said it I don't know many times in this House. What I suggested was that they close the current centre as it operates currently, and in tandem, put civil servants in place who have counselling abilities, nursing, doctors, those who have an understanding of addictions, those who have experience in homelessness and know how to address those issues, employment issues, get those in place right away and then hit the restart button and start over again. This time, serve all those individuals who are in need as opposed to just grouping them all together and kicking it down the road.

Actually, you know what? I'm going to go back and ask the Premier the question that he says he doesn't understand.

Can your government not understand that it is deeply unfair to expose people with unique issues to all the challenges that government appears incapable of addressing?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Well, it's interesting to hear the nuanced words now of the Leader of the Opposition after thumping the table for two weeks saying close it, close it, close it, much to the chagrin of the person sitting next to him from Charlottetown-West Royalty, who has lobbied hard for these individuals. He doesn't want to close it. He knows that's not the right thing to do.

We're working with Islanders and Island organizations to provide these services because we need to provide them. You don't need to nuance your words; you need to understand the science, work with the professionals, and do the work that needs to be done, and not sit there, "Please," and beg the government to do nothing. We won't do that.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: First of all, Madam Speaker, we don't have to beg and plead this government to do nothing. They do that all by themselves.

I don't know why this Premier, instead of addressing the issue and trying to solve the

issue, he keeps trying to spin it and put it back on others. Again, it's a say anything, do nothing, blame others kind of government.

We had said to close it as it currently operates. How fair is it for someone who is seeking help with addictions to walk into a centre where this government knew that there was open drug use in it? That's not right. That's not an understanding. That's not helpful.

My question today is now to the Minister of Justice: Last week, the minister was asked whether the decision to allow illegal drug use at a site close to two schools was illegal. He said no, and it's in the Hansard.

Open drug use at outreach centre (further)

My question for the Minister of Justice: Given the facts that the minister said the decision was illegal, was this a crime?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

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

As the member across brings this forward every time, I tell him that I do not direct the Charlottetown police on what charges they lay. That is up to the Charlottetown police. They do a fine job. They're dealing with this difficult situation that they are faced with. They're doing their job. I don't tell them how to do their job. We'll continue to support our police.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

He is the Attorney General, Minister of Justice, minister responsible for law enforcement here on Prince Edward Island. On Friday, he said that it was illegal to openly use drugs on public property.

Now I'm going to ask him the same question again: Was this a crime?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I do not tell the Charlottetown police how to direct their services. The Charlottetown police are quite able to handle their policing and I support them in every measure that they take.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

[1:40 p.m.]

Hon. H. Perry: Madam Speaker, I didn't ask a lawyer on Friday if it was legal or not. I asked the minister responsible. Today, I'm asking him again. I'm not asking Charlottetown police, I'm asking him.

As Minister of Justice here on Prince Edward Island, was this a crime?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I answered this question several times.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

So, he refuses to answer that question. Just last week, the Minister of Justice told the House that he knew nothing about the policy to allow open drug use at the outreach centre in Charlottetown. Then he also told the House that this policy was not legal. How can you know nothing about a policy, but also know that it is or isn't legal?

My question is to the Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General: When were you informed of the policy to allow open drug use, or open use of illegal drugs, at the outreach centre in Charlottetown?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, we support the Charlottetown Police Services. They have the discretion to lay charges when they feel to lay charges.

This is a difficult situation where we have to support everyone involved here. We're not here to put all our people with addictions in prison. That's not the role of – I don't think anyone wants to see that. We want to get to the core of the problem with trafficking these drugs that are tearing apart our communities. That's where the heart of the problem is and that's where we want to stay focused.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Obviously, he doesn't care about open drug use. That's quite obvious from that response.

Question for the Minister of Health: Mental health services often go hand in hand with addictions, yet this do-nothing government seems to not really grasp that reality. Services are hard to access, and people suffer as the do-nothing government continues to make excuses and pass the buck.

Access to addiction supports (further)

Minister, what is the average wait time for someone seeking assistance at the Mount Herbert detox centre?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Obviously, mental health supports are very important to support that community when they need it. We understand that there are challenges with accessing some services at certain times, but it's very important to our government. I think we've made a lot of investments in mental health since we started. We have those supports in place, so we'll continue to do so.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Madam Speaker, there's a clear lack of resources in our emergency departments, in our detox facility, in providing access to mental health care.

My question is to the minister: What length of time does the minister consider acceptable to wait to access detox services?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I would also point out, again, we put in the opioid replacement therapy program that's helped hundreds of Islanders to move from addictions to that. We do have the inpatient and outpatient withdrawal management programs, and we do have priority for those under 18 and those over 65 to many of our services.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I would ask that question again, but we have to move on. I'm really disappointed that this minister cannot answer these questions that are very, very important, not only to people who are seeking these services, but to the families who have to put their heads on the pillow at night, keep one eye open, and just wait for that knock on the door. People need services and they need them now. This minister should be up on this file.

We all know this government doesn't bother to plan for any and all possibilities, as we saw with their mishandling of the outreach centre. They prefer the tried-and-true method of hiding behind others and denying responsibility for their own failures. This do-nothing Minister of Health seems particularly partial to the fingers-crossed backup plan for dealing with the mental health and addiction crisis that is gripping our province.

Health care capacity challenges (further)

Question to the Minister of Health: How many patients experiencing a mental health or addictions emergency are turned away from the Mount Herbert facility and both of the emergency departments due to the lack of resources?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Again, I would disagree with that comment. The emergency short-stay unit at the hospital will be opening next month. That's going to be a very valuable tool for especially those in crisis. I've toured the facility. It's going to be very helpful for those who are having a crisis situation. Again, that has been one of our responses to the mental health crisis on PEI.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thanks, Madam Speaker.

He totally ignored the question. It was: How many patients experiencing a mental health or addictions emergency are turned away from the Mount Herbert facility or the two ERs here on Prince Edward Island that are open?

[1:45 p.m.]

We know this government is getting a failing grade from Islanders; a failing grade when it comes to providing timely access to mental health and addictions supports. We know that instead of doing anything tangible to address all these barriers, this do-nothing minister prefers to stick his head in the sand.

Question to the minister: Do you collect data on the number of patients required to use emergency services as a stopgap for mental health and addiction challenges here on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Again, if we want to reference somebody sticking their head in the sand, I would encourage the Leader of the Opposition to actually visit the outreach centre and actually...

[Interjections]

Speaker: Members.

Hon. M. McLane: ...and actually talk to those staff that provide a valuable service to them. These are people who support those vulnerable populations, so we appreciate them, and we continue to support them when they do their good work.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

G. McNeilly: Talk about places that you shouldn't visit, Minister of Health, you shouldn't visit the emergency room right now because there were 76 people in the emergency department last night at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Furthermore, the vast majority of those in the waiting room were there for more than 10 hours.

Health care capacity challenges (further)

A question to the Minister of Health: What is the impact of the doctor shortage on emergency rooms, and what is the minister doing to deal with this growing tragic problem?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

We understand the challenge with staffing some of our facilities. We know it's across Canada, our physician shortage. We've made a lot of changes; again, I want to applaud the College of Physicians and Surgeons to open the door to US-trained physicians and also six other countries in the world.

That won't happen overnight that we'll see that, but that's a major barrier, especially to our internationally trained medical students. We need more physicians and we're moving in the right direction. Obviously, it's not fast enough, but we will continue to recruit physicians on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

G. McNeilly: Just a general question to anybody over there.

Housing for health care workers

If you had a province and we recruited, out of province, 31 people in Dubai and they're supposed to come and stay and practice here, which minister over there is responsible for finding them housing? Will you please stand up?

Speaker: Hon. member, could you direct your question to one of the members?

Hon. M. McLane: I've got it, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

We understand that to support these new health care workers is important in PEI. I think I've mentioned it in the House before; we did put out an expression of interest to our tourism partners for short-term housing in order to begin that process. So, we've done that, and we've had some really good, strong inquiries. That will start them on their path to becoming an Islander and contributing to our health care system.

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

G. McNeilly: So, we recruit people to come to our great province – full-time permanent, because we need them here for a very long time – and we provide them a short-term solution? You talked about it before. What is plan B, minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

It sounds like the member doesn't want us to recruit health care workers to PEI. I'm confused here.

Again, we understand the challenges with other services with regards to housing within our province, but let's recruit them. We're doing some short-term solutions and we're confident that the housing stock will improve. We value these people that are going to contribute to our health care workers, so we're not doing the same thing and expecting different results like you guys did for 13 years.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

R. Henderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We all know PEI's health care crisis continues to alarm Islanders as we see proposals for ambulatory care consolidations, we see hospitals overflowing, the beds; we also see ERs are overflowing.

This government promised Island nurses graduating that they would get an \$8,000 incentive bonus if they signed a return of service agreement for 3,900 hours. If they accept a position in rural PEI, those nurses receive an additional \$5,000, totaling \$13,000.

Nursing Recruitment Incentive Program

Question to the Minister of Health: How many graduate nurses have applied to the graduate Nursing Recruitment Incentive Program since it was announced earlier this year?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I don't have those numbers right off hand, but it is an effective program so that we can try to encourage staffing at our rural facilities. We try to compensate those nurses who choose to work in those facilities. We can look at those numbers, I guess, in the future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

R. Henderson: Madam Speaker, I would assume that this would actually be one of the more positive programs that this government has announced, and I'm rather surprised that he wouldn't have those numbers to spew out in the Legislature here.

[1:50 p.m.]

The reality is nurses have decided to join on to this particular program, they've signed the paperwork, and they are working towards their 3,900 hours.

Question to the Minister of Health: How many nurses who have signed on have actually received their bonus? Have they actually received their money?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I am aware of this issue. It is –

[Interjections]

Hon. M. McLane: It is, and I have instructed Health PEI and actually the Nurses' Union to fix this darn problem because it is a pain. I've gotten a lot of emails on this.

I don't want to point the finger at anybody, but I would say with both organizations, with collective agreements and MOUs, it is complex. It's unfortunate. I've gotten emails on it and I've been very forceful about asking them to solve this problem.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

R. Henderson: Once again, Madam Speaker, this government; the horse is out of the barn again and they're trying to figure out a way to put it back in.

When a government makes an announcement and makes a promise to these people out there that we need badly, we need to figure out how we can deliver on the promise. I, too, am getting calls, yet the minister has no idea how many people actually applied to the particular program, but he's getting calls. I'm getting calls that people are not able to get this money and they're working hard to do that and they're expecting it.

Maybe the minister could shed some light as to why these people are not getting this money in a little more detail than what he just mentioned.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Again, I don't want to point fingers. It's actually with the employer and the union. It's important that they follow the process. I don't think I can explain the Nurses' Union contract as well in the Legislature, but it's important that we follow those rules.

But I would agree with the member that it's frustrating. I have four emails, for sure, that I can recall about this. I've asked them to fix this darn problem as fast as possible.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As we all know in here, we are in a housing crisis and have been for quite some time. A CBC article from Friday states, "Last week, Health PEI sent a letter to the Island's tourism and landlord associations putting out feelers for possible accommodations across the province."

Last week?

Housing for health care workers (further)

Question to the Minister of Health: With all due respect, did it not occur to you that when people move here, they need a place to live?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Obviously, those employees have not arrived on Prince Edward Island. I appreciate the need to address that. We put out that expression of interest. If we did it during the summer, our tourism operators are pretty darn busy. I think this was a great timing for them to look at some short-term opportunities for our new internationally educated nurses.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: They are pretty darn busy, but guess what? They plan ahead. They would know if they had spaces or not and they could have planned accordingly.

Another quote: "Health PEI is looking for short- and long-term housing for the couple dozen internationally trained nurses coming from Dubai this winter. That group is part of the 200 internationally trained nurses Health PEI is aiming to recruit in the next year."

Question to the Minister of Housing: Please tell me that your government is not as siloed as it looks? Do you have housing for these hundreds of workers?

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

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

I'll take that question because we're being accused of having silos. I would just say that the issue of workforce housing is often worked on in my department. As early as last spring and over the summer, I know that

staff in my department have had conversations with people in the community, tourism providers or other opportunities where we might use for temporary workforce housing.

This is not something entirely new as reported. We are working. We do know that we have an influx of health care workers coming into the community. Yes, my department is involved in trying to procure some temporary space to accommodate some of those people that we expect to be coming into the province and helping us with some of our health care issues.

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

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Minister of Health and Wellness is recruiting off-Island health care workers that we desperately need, but it appears that he and his colleagues have forgotten that these workers are people who need basic services like housing.

Population strategy

Question to the Minister of Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population: Your refusal to create a population strategy hinders Islanders' access to health care. When will you finally create a full, comprehensive population strategy? This is a prime example of why we need one.

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

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

[1:55 p.m.]

These are not quick fixes. We know there are pressures. We know there are opportunities with growth. We have an aging population. We have an aging workforce. We are going to respond to this growth opportunity.

We do need to work together. We're collaborating with our departments. We're collaborating with community partners. This impact is Island-wide, and we certainly

know that investing in this type of framework is investing in our workforce, which is investing in PEI.

Thank you.

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

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

When Islanders were first promised province-wide midwifery services by this government, it was 2019. If that first promise had been kept, children born on PEI using midwives would be in kindergarten today. Sadly, we're still waiting for that first child to enter the world, never mind enter the school system.

Midwifery services

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: You're the third minister I've asked this question to, so please don't fail it as spectacularly as your two predecessors. When will we see midwives providing services to Island families?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

As probably the hon. member knows, I think he may have met our new midwifery services lead, who began to work for us in August. Our second midwife is actually already hired and is scheduled to start in December of this year, so we're going to stand up that team and provide midwifery services to Island residents.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Forgive me if I bring a certain amount of skepticism to this discussion. We've had so many due dates for this happy event that I'm

beginning to wonder if it will ever come to full term and be delivered.

[Interjections]

Last year, the Minister of Health of the day told this House, and I quote, "...the positions for...midwives to practice here on the Island...were advertised and there have been applications from across Canada...."

That was a year ago. The minister has just told us that we have two midwives currently working here on Prince Edward Island, but no midwifery services, if I take it from his implication.

When will we see midwifery services provided to Island families on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Again, the challenge in standing up this program has been hiring, there's no doubt. We're halfway there with the hiring of those two people in our system. Especially the second one, they have to stay with their clients through their pregnancy phase, so there is a four- or five-month lag before they can start performing those services on PEI.

We look forward to standing up our midwifery program.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: We all look forward to this program, as you put it, being stood up, minister. I feel like I'm being stood up more times than I would like to be.

Midwifery is about so much more than the birth of the baby. Midwives deal with maternal and child health, and they provide prenatal, delivery, and postnatal supports to mother and child. That sort of continuity of care is critical to the wellbeing of the child, of the mother, and of the family. That's why, no doubt, the benefits of midwifery are

widely applauded by public health, in public health circles, and those who advocate for improved social determinants of health.

To the same minister: Why is your government continuing to delay access for Island mothers to all of these benefits of midwifery services?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

It's important to note that there are only six baccalaureate programs of midwifery in Canada. There's currently some exploration led by the University of Newfoundland in order to look at possibly standing up those services in Atlantic Canada. That's a good opportunity for us to create more midwives in our region, so I look forward to further discussions.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

S. Dillon: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

For generations, Islanders have turned to the pages of the *Guardian*, and one of the first places that they would turn to is the obituaries. Recently, the parent company of the *Guardian* made a business decision to move their online obituaries behind a paywall, which is going to restrict access to many.

Access to local obituaries

My question is to the Premier: Have you gotten any feedback from Islanders in the wake of this business decision?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

In my four-plus years as Premier, it amazes me the topics of conversation that you have with Islanders when you meet them. I would say an alarming number brought up to me this business decision by SaltWire to not provide free access to the obituaries.

[2:00 p.m.]

I'm a newspaper person. That's what I did at the beginning of my professional career. I love the newspaper. Islanders have a great connection and affinity to their newspaper and the death announcements. I worked at the radio station when they made the decision first to not broadcast the obituaries on the radio and it was an Island catastrophe, to say the least.

So, yes, it has been brought up to me a number of times, and I guess I would encourage SaltWire to understand that this is kind of part of the Island DNA, and it's a very important ritual and public service that Islanders have grown accustomed to, and I think it would be in their best business interest to revisit that, Madam Speaker.

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

S. Dillon: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I realize that it was a business decision taken by a private business, but there is a public impact to the readers as well.

My question is to the Premier: Would you be prepared to write a letter as Premier to SaltWire, asking them to revisit this business decision and to not place their obituary notices behind a paywall?

R. Henderson: (Indistinct) government (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Madam Speaker, as I say, I'm from this industry so I understand how it has changed dramatically over the 30-plus years since I've been in it. Not everyone goes and picks up the hard copy of the newspaper anymore, certainly not to the extent that they used to. I think all media outlets, such as SaltWire and the *Graphics*, for example, are trying to find new and creative ways to get money for their content that they provide so they can continue to provide service.

I would like to try to find a way to encourage the conversation with SaltWire, so if I can do that through a letter – but I

think I would like to tread carefully. I don't know if the Premier of PEI or the Government of PEI should be trying to dictate to, particularly, independent media how they go about their business, but if there's a way to work together on it, I'd be open to that, for sure.

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

S. Dillon: Thank you, and thank you, Madam Speaker.

It would seem, in relation to this business decision, it is part of a larger trend moving more and more essential content like public safety and emergency notices behind paywalls, restricting access to Islanders.

My question is to the Premier again: If this business decision isn't reversed, what recourse, if any, would the province have to register its disappointment?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

One person at Crapaud rink told me we shouldn't advertise in the paper if they didn't reverse this. I don't know if I would like to take that approach, but I think in kind of an offhanded comment, the Member from O'Leary-Inverness suggested that maybe there's a role for government here. I know we do advertise extensively through our public engagement and our communications departments with SaltWire newspapers; with the *Graphics*, for example.

Look, would I be open to having a conversation to help them as they transition, to try to redefine their business models? Yes. Do I want to have the Government of PEI sponsoring the obituaries? I don't know. Maybe there's a creative way to take a look at this, but in all seriousness, there are a lot of people who rely on those media outlets and others for public service, et cetera. We do a lot of extensive advertising and public service messaging. So, is there a way to incorporate this in? If there is, I'd be open to the conversation. (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

B. Trivers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Island fishers are still not allowed to commercially fish mackerel. Mackerel don't respect international boundaries and quite often go down into the shared waters with the United States where US fishers are allowed to fish mackerel. It's not only unfair, but it's most likely detrimental to our mackerel population that US fishers can harvest mackerel while PEI fishers can't.

Commercial mackerel fishery

A question to the Minister of Fisheries, Tourism, Sport and Culture: Holy mackerel, minister. What are you going to do to address this issue?

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

Hon. C. Deagle: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll try to answer that question.

[2:05 p.m.]

Yes, I understand it doesn't quite make sense because it's the same stock and it travels, obviously, in the winter, and then the US fishes it. We've relayed that. I know the federal minister in DFO is aware of that and I know they're working on lobbying the US government on aligning with us to close that fishery as well, to make sense.

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

B. Trivers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the equation, our Island fishers, like lobster fishers, are having to import food-grade fish to use as bait in their lobster traps and they're paying record prices. But our waters here on Prince Edward Island seem to be full of striped bass and fishers believe that the striped bass could be used for bait, but they also may be having a detrimental impact on the mackerel population.

Another question to the Minister of Fisheries, Tourism, Sport and Culture: Minister, our mackerel are taking a striping. What studies have you commissioned or lobbied for to determine the impact of

striped bass on mackerel in the waters off of PEI?

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

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

We haven't commissioned any reports. DFO would conduct the studies on this. I believe striped bass is currently in the cautious zone, which means it can't be used as a commercial fishery. There's a recreational fishery, but I think DFO's latest report they did was in 2022 and it was still in the cautionary zone, so it can't be used as a commercial fishery right now.

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

B. Trivers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm looking for action from this minister. We see that the striped bass recreational fishery is thriving. The commercial fishers I've spoken to, they would like to fish striped bass. They could be used as bait. They could be sold for consumption. I know the minister is working with the federal government, but let's not take no for an answer.

Question to Minister of Fisheries, Tourism, Sport and Culture: Minister, are you going to get off your recreational bass and pursue a commercial striped bass fishery here on PEI?

[Laughter]

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

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

Obviously, commercial fishers would like to fish it, but if the science and DFO says that there's not enough fish to support that, then we can't just fish it until it's all gone because we need a healthy ecosystem. We can't just have lobster. There has to be a number of species for a healthy ecosystem. DFO has the science in 2022, their latest report, that says it's in the cautionary zone.

If it's in the cautionary zone, it can't be fished commercially.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Seniors food program (further)

Question to the Minister of Social Development: You did the \$250,000 Seniors Food Program in the eastern part of Prince Edward Island. You said that you did not spend all the money. How much did the program cost?

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

Hon. B. Ramsay: Thank you for that question. I don't have that figure.

Thank you.

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

G. McNeilly: If you don't have the number, which you said you didn't, so you know that it didn't spend it, are you planning – you mentioned about planning on using the extra funding. Is that going to be done this year?

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

Hon. B. Ramsay: Thank you for that question. Yes, it is.

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

G. McNeilly: It's funny because I'm looking at a document here. On March 3rd, 2022, I submitted written questions on that program, and they were due April 24th, 2022, but none of them were answered. The questions weren't answered.

Minister, will you take a look at these questions and make sure that you respond to these questions within the week when I pass them in and when I table them?

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

Hon. B. Ramsay: Thank you for that question, Madam Speaker. I would take a look at those questions and if I can answer those questions, I will.

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

G. McNeilly: No, you have to answer these questions because they're about the food program. They're very important.

Another thing is, talking to Islanders over the weekend too, food insecurity is very, very important. This struck a nerve with seniors in our province. What they said to me, I'm going to ask you right now.

You have money left over from that program and you have a lot of it. Will you distribute those – and this is coming from an Islander – in the form of gift cards across the province to food banks and people who are hungry?

I have a plan here. Will you look at this plan? Will you distribute this money before the end of 2023?

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

[2:10 p.m.]

Hon. B. Ramsay: Thank you, Madam Speaker, but we have our own plan, member.

Thank you very much.

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

G. McNeilly: What is the plan?

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

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

We're still chatting about that.

Thank you.

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

G. McNeilly: So, you have the plan. Will you table the plan that you just said that you have in this Legislature? Or will you have a look at the document that I'm going to table here today talking about the scope, approach, process of our plan? Because that's all you talk about, is us not having a plan. It's right here.

This money needs to be spent on Islanders, and it needs to go out to hungry Islanders in our province. Will you have a look at this, and if it's possible, Minister of Social Development, will you get this money and these food cards, or whatever we can do with it, out to Islanders before the end of the year?

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

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

I'll look at your questions. If I can answer them, I will, as I've said. We are working on a plan, as I've said, so I can't table a plan that's not ready. I did say that on Friday, and I'll say that again today. I think we will go with our own plan, but I will answer your questions if I can, member.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, your final question.

Hon. member.

G. McNeilly: Oh. Sorry. I was listening to that and –

[Interjections]

G. McNeilly: The big plan is for us to look at food insecurity with the most serious lens, and for seniors who are hungry, and they've come to me and talked about this. We've got to do this together. That's why we're participating. You know what? This is a big issue. We can't have a pilot food program – that fails – for 16 Islanders. This has to be provincewide.

Minister, when is the province-wide plan – if that’s the target – going to be released from this government to send food across the Island for seniors who are hungry?

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

Hon. B. Ramsay: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question.

The member keeps saying he’s getting calls from seniors, and I’m Minister of Seniors. My phone number is on social media every single day, and I’m telling everybody in this House right now that I have not received one call from any senior. I asked the member if he’s had calls from seniors, if he would give me those names. I will definitely contact them, and when our plan is ready, it will be out. I did say it’s not going to be very long from now.

That’s all I have for now.

Speaker: End of Question Period.

Statements by Ministers

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table unanswered written questions that were supposed to be answered on April 24th, 2022 regarding the targeted senior meal program, and I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Madam Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a sample plan – scope, approach, process – to distribute surplus funding – which we now know we don’t know how much that is, but if there is

that there from that program – to Island seniors for a failed Seniors’ Food Pilot Program, and I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, by Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table the PEI Human Rights Commission Annual Report for the period ending March 31st, 2023, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Premier, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Madam Speaker, I present herewith a message from Her Honour, the Honourable Antoinette Perry the Lieutenant Governor of Prince Edward Island, which said message is signed by Her Honour.

Speaker: Hon. members, I shall ask the Clerk to read the message.

Hon. members, please stand while the message is being read.

[2:15 p.m.]

Clerk: Honourable Darlene Compton Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Province House, Charlottetown Prince Edward Island

Dear Madam Speaker:

Her Honour, the Honourable Antoinette Perry, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Prince Edward Island, hereby transmits the Estimates of Capital Revenue and Capital Expenditure required to carry on the public services of the Province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025, and also until the passage of the capital estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026.

In accordance with the provisions of the *Constitution Act, 1867* and the Prince

Edward Island Terms of Union, 1873, Her Honour recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Commended by,

James Aiken
Clerk of the Executive Council
and Secretary to Cabinet

Honourable Antoinette Perry
Lieutenant Governor

at Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island
this 15th day of November 2023

Speaker: The hon. Premier

Hon. D. King: Madam Speaker, by Command of Her Honour, I present herewith the Estimates of Capital Revenue and Capital Expenditure required to carry on the public services of the Province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025, and also until the passage of the capital estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance that consideration of the Estimates of Capital Revenue and Capital Expenditure in Committee of the Whole House be added to the Orders of the Day until such time as they are despatched.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. J. Burrige: Good afternoon.
Bonjour. 'Kwe.

Madam Speaker, it is my honour to rise in the House today to share the Government of Prince Edward Island's Capital Budget for 2024-2025.

This Budget is about reinvesting in Prince Edward Island. It's about appreciating our province for all that we have and asking

ourselves now what can we do to make our Island even better? With some thoughtful and intentional investments, while keeping fiscal affordability in mind, this is our vision of where we want to go.

This Budget I'm presenting today includes investments of \$368.8 million for 2024-2025, with a five-year total of \$1.3 billion.

Madam Speaker, with your indulgence, I would like to share with my colleagues the Capital Budget investments that will take Prince Edward Island to the next level.

Transforming Health care

It's no secret that health care is at the top of everyone's minds. Health care is one of the many things that ties us together as Islanders. We all need it throughout our lives.

To address the challenges of the current system, I think we can all agree that we have to do things differently, and that's what our government has been doing for quite some time.

To give a nod to Einstein, we can't keep trying to do the same thing over and over again, expecting different results. It just won't work. Instead, our government focuses on being forward-thinking, creative, adaptive, and collaborative when it comes to health care.

A perfect example of doing things differently is the Mental Health and Addictions Campus.

This ongoing investment to implement the master plan for building a more responsive and accessible mental health, addiction, and substance use service for Islanders is nearing the finish line. Design and construction continue on the various components of the campus project. This includes the new QEH mental health and addictions emergency department and short-stay unit and the new acute care hospital and life skills centre.

Over the next four years, we will invest \$167 million into the campus, bringing one of the biggest capital investments in our province's history to an end that will serve Islanders well into the future.

Another project in progress is the UPEI Medical School.

When medical students practice in our province, we need to ensure they have not only a place to learn, but also a place to live. That is why our government will be investing \$17.5 million over five years to create learning and staffing spaces at the QEH and PCH, and a new building near the QEH for resident accommodations and programming.

When we talk about reimagining health care in our province, patient medical homes will play a key role in enabling collaborative teamwork and providing better access to care for Islanders.

We know this modern method is working. We just need to keep the momentum going.

With \$57 million over 5 years, we will continue implementing patient medical homes across PEI to improve health care access for Islanders. Construction is underway at sites in Summerside and Charlottetown, with planning underway for a secondary site in Charlottetown, and another in Three Rivers.

[2:20 p.m.]

When I spoke earlier about valuing and appreciating what our province currently has to offer, our Island hospitals and the medical professionals who work within them certainly deserve that recognition. They treat patients with the utmost care each and every day. We need to do everything we can to not only maintain this quality of service for Islanders but enhance it to ensure our hospitals serve well into the future.

With \$125.5 million over five years, we are focused on continuing improvements for health care facilities across our province.

This includes a new KCMH in Three Rivers and a QEH redevelopment, ventilation upgrades at QEH and long-term care facilities, roof replacements, and various enhancements required to ensure that clients and staff continue to have access to services in safe and appropriate locations. This investment also includes improved building controls, and electrical and air handling units at the QEH to ensure the facility is prepared for future expansions.

These investments are also made possible by the continued support of the hospital foundations across the province, which totals an estimated \$31 million over five years.

Lastly, to modernize and digitize our health care system, we will be investing \$18.3 million in technology enhancements that will support our hospital information systems, mental health and addictions medical records, and long-term care solutions for residents. This also includes funding to support the community pharmacies accessing electronic medical records as part of the Pharmacy Plus PEI program.

Addressing Housing

Now, let's talk about another very popular "H" word in our province these days: housing.

We've said it once and we'll say it again, our government is committed to tackling the housing crisis in Prince Edward Island. We've demonstrated this commitment not only through investments, but also through actions we've taken since 2019, actions like constructing 157 public affordable housing units to support Islanders on the housing registry; supporting home ownership through the Down Payment Assistance Program, Rent to Own, and the soon to come Closing Cost Housing Program; and providing grants to our valued developers who are joining our efforts in confronting the housing crisis through the Affordable Housing Development Program, the Housing Challenge Fund, and the HST rebate on new rental builds that our government announced on October 3rd, just to name a few.

When times get tough, we don't look away and pretend it's not an issue. Our government has proven we can handle challenges. Just look at the past three years. We've tackled challenges head on and worked quickly to respond to them.

Housing is a human right. Addressing the housing crisis needs to come from a place of compassion. Every Islander should have a roof over their head and a safe place to sleep, and that's what we're working to do.

But the solution isn't simple. It takes much effort by many people from government, businesses, non-profit organizations, and the list goes on. However, by sharing a common goal of solving this crisis once and for all, we're on track to doing so.

With an investment of \$12 million over five years, we will create a 25-bed emergency shelter in Summerside, support the relocation of the Community Outreach Centre in Charlottetown, and start work at Smith Lodge to add 13 more supportive housing beds.

With a significant investment of \$176 million over five years, we will purchase or build an additional 95 social and affordable housing units, for a total of 560 units, which includes developments in the Hillsborough Park area and Malpeque Road.

And of course, it wouldn't be right to talk about housing without recognizing our valued partnerships with the PEI Construction Association, Holland College, and our public schools.

Together, we're working to build more homes in communities across the province, with an investment of \$10.5 million to build an additional 34 units, for a total of 78 units over five years.

Modernizing Schools

We know our province's population is increasing at a rapid pace, and I know we all have our concerns about how this influx is impacting the province in variable ways, but thoughtful planning and actionable investments can help ease these concerns.

I'm here to remind members of this Legislative Assembly of the positives that come with a growing population. Our median age continues to drop, and we have more children and youth living on our Island than in recent history.

[2:25 p.m.]

These young Islanders are the future of this province. They're our future healthcare and construction workers, entrepreneurs, teachers, public servants, and the list goes on. Some will serve here in this Legislature one day.

We know investing in our young Islanders' education today prepares us for a stronger tomorrow.

That's why this Capital Budget includes \$176 million over five years for school expansions and replacements, including Queen Charlotte Intermediate School to add more classrooms and breakout rooms, to initiate a building assessment of Westisle School to determine future upgrade needs, and the completion of the Stratford High School.

It also includes honouring our commitment from the 2023 election to start the planning process for a junior high school in Stratford, once consultations with the Public Schools Branch are complete.

I believe we can all agree in this Legislature that we are fortunate to have quality schools across the province that are filled with dedicated staff fostering positive learning environments and helping our children reach their full potential.

So, then the question becomes, what can we do to make our schools even better?

We heard suggestions from our schools, and we listened.

With \$22 million over four years, we're pleased to introduce the new School Revitalization Fund, delivering on yet another commitment made in the last election.

Working with our key stakeholders and families of schools, this new funding will address capital repairs and renovation needs within our current schools to make impactful improvements to school infrastructure that will enhance learning conditions for students and staff.

This Capital Budget also includes \$300,000 to start a pilot program to create outdoor learning spaces that stimulate new educational opportunities and a greater appreciation for our natural environment.

We're on track to meet our commitment of fully electrifying our bus fleet by 2030. To do this, we will allocate \$57.6 million over five years to purchase more electric school

buses, an increase of \$6.3 million over last year.

Revitalizing and Strengthening Communities

Our government believes in leading by example.

Another way we stay committed to our net zero goals is by revitalizing our government buildings and public housing to be more energy efficient and environmentally friendly. This Budget includes \$22.4 million over five years to make necessary improvements.

When Hurricane Fiona came ripping through last year, it was a real wake-up call for all of us. Unpredictability and climate change seem to go hand in hand. What we can do is be prepared for when it happens.

To be ready for what's to come, we will invest \$7.2 million over five years in emergency preparedness to purchase and replace generators at government-owned infrastructure sites and public housing across the province.

This Budget also includes procuring the necessary emergency equipment to support municipal warming centres such as radios and cots; as well as fire response vehicles and equipment to respond to the potential impacts of forest fires as other areas of our country has seen in recent years.

Our prized provincial parks were also greatly impacted by Fiona. The parks suffered heavy tree damage and required extensive cleanup before welcoming Islanders and tourists back to enjoy them this year.

We know how loved these parks are by both Islanders and visitors. We're pleased to share that we'll be making our parks even more enjoyable by investing \$10 million over the next five years to provide new playgrounds, boardwalks, equipment, campsites, and renovations to washrooms and structures. This is delivering on yet another commitment we made to Islanders in the last election.

And of course, it wouldn't be a capital budget without announcing investments in our roads and bridges.

These investments help both Islanders and visitors travel from tip to tip of our beautiful province and support economic growth in our communities.

We will invest \$16.1 million, for a new total of \$256 million, to increase funding for bridge replacements and improvements, as well as provincial-wide paving.

Conclusion

This Capital Budget is about celebrating the province we have today and investing in the possibilities of Prince Edward Island tomorrow.

[2:30 p.m.]

Our plan was developed with considerations for government's fiscal capacity and sustainability at top of mind. Every investment has been carefully considered and calculated. Each budget line serves a purpose that directly contributes to a better future for our province.

With an investment of \$1.3 billion over the next five years, we're transforming our health care, addressing our housing crisis, modernizing our schools, and revitalizing and strengthening our communities.

There's so much for us to be proud of in this province. Step by step, this Budget will take our province to the next level of where we want to go.

Before I end things, I must take a moment to thank everyone who has contributed to this Budget, which of course includes the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island. This plan is for you, and we hope what you see in this Budget is a reflection of what you asked for.

I also want to thank the many professionals in the Department of Finance and throughout government who are committed to ensuring we table the responsible and accurate Budget I have presented here today.

Madam Speaker, thank you for your indulgence.

Thank you. *Merci. Wela'lin.*

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

In brief, no matter how this government tries to spin it, today's Capital Budget reveals a government that has run out of ideas.

In 2023, we are facing some incredible challenges here on Prince Edward Island. Our population is growing far more quickly than anyone ever expected, and the challenges associated with that growth are multiplying.

For that reason, I would have expected government to begin a very serious discussion, both internally and externally, about the reality of these challenges. But what do I see in this document? A lurch towards the same old solutions that are simply not keeping pace with the world around us.

For example, in my view, the money associated with housing is completely inadequate. The pressures faced by young Islanders hoping to buy their first home are largely unaddressed by the plans embedded in this Budget. Or take a look at the people who are pressured by rents that are too high and the costs that are getting out of control. These are fundamental pressures, and government's inability to devise a long-range plan has never been more clear.

For the next four years – in 2024, '25-'26, '26-'27, and '27-'28 – for the next four years, the capital spending at the PEI Housing Corporation is supposed to drop every year. In fact, the Housing Corporation's budget is supposed to fall by \$46 million over the next four years. It's incredible.

At this point, we are facing historic pressures across our province. There are thousands and thousands of people struggling. There is nothing more important to them than shelter. But instead of ramping up a massive plan to respond to these challenges, we see a government that attempts to paint over its housing failures by a relatively large investment in one year,

then sharp reductions in the years ahead. This kind of short-term thinking is partly how this government has begun to fail so many.

From a more general perspective, we see a growing failure in access to health care. We know that affordability issues are hurting nearly every Islander. We see growing disasters in mental health, addictions, and homelessness. But this government's capacity to develop a long-range plan is extremely limited. Instead of a vision for change, we get a government's response that has clearly run out of gas.

I believe our province is now in the midst of unprecedented change. If we do not master that change, there is so much more that we can lose. I really wonder. I wonder whether this government is the master of change or a servant to outdated solutions.

Over the past few weeks, we will have the opportunity to learn more about this Budget when we have many, many questions. While this government may wish to point to outdated solutions in the time of change, I will be looking for indications of a real response to a period of great and growing uncertainty. In the absence of such solutions, we'll do our best to offer clear alternatives.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the minister for her message.

[2:35 p.m.]

I also want to start by thanking the many civil servants in the Department of Finance and beyond, actually, across government, who have worked very hard over the past weeks and months to develop this Budget. It's an incredible amount of work to do that. In my experience, the quality of that work amongst civil servants is extremely higher.

Unfortunately, I cannot say the same about the work of this government and what it does to actually implement the many promises that we find in these budgets.

Provincial budgets cannot and should not be drafted without proper understanding of the communities and the people they serve. Our Island community is growing at an increasing rate, and this Budget should absolutely take that into account.

It's very, very difficult to know if any budget, including this one, is putting the Island on the right path without actually understanding the challenges and the benefits. The minister mentioned that, and indeed there are many benefits that come along with our growing population, but there are challenges, too.

Unfortunately, this government has failed to produce anything resembling a population growth strategy, and without that, we continue to grow at a rapid pace with seemingly no plan for how we are building and supporting all Islanders, new and old.

The one thing we do know, of course, is that we are indeed growing, which means that we need to build. We need to build housing. We need to build health care infrastructure. We need to buy buildings and land in order to protect their use and their value. We need a lot of action, and that action has to be prioritized, because government has been so inactive for so long that we're now forced to play catch-up.

But playing catch-up is not good enough for Islanders. Islanders deserve a government that can look five, 10, 15, 50 years down the road and build for the future. It's simply unthinkable that this government, and governments before it, have so consistently and so utterly failed Islanders in this regard.

I want to look at this Budget and see record spending in many areas, and to feel hopeful. I really do. But unfortunately, I cannot. This government has spent the last four years underspending and underprioritizing the most important aspects of the budget for Islanders; again, things like housing, health care, education, protecting farmland for future generations. All of these things have been sorely ignored and under-actioned.

I've now spent the last four years listening to items in a budget be announced and re-announced and re-announced again, and re-announced again, again, like the dental program, or midwifery, or the primary

caregiver grant. I suppose in relative terms, though, those are the lucky initiatives that haven't completely faded away and disappeared, like the land bank, or the new mental health hospital.

It's undeniable that commitments made in previous budgets have not always materialized as promised. This lack of follow-through not only undermines public trust, but it also hampers the effective execution of crucial projects that are vital to the development of our communities. As I mentioned previously, our population is growing at a rapid pace, and government must keep up with that pace, with services and with infrastructure to serve all Islanders.

Sadly, unless it's something that this government or its ministers identify as a pet project or a legacy project, the need is often left unmet, and Islanders are abandoned. It seems as if they have to actually plan for it, or to do some hard work. If they have to do that, well, forget it, it seems to be beyond their ability. That's terribly sad for Islanders. Not to mention, there's probably no political points for them to score there.

Let's be clear, most of the promises made in this Budget won't even break ground before the next capital budget is tabled. It's really important that we remember that. So, while the proposed Capital Budget may appear promising on the surface, the history of unmet promises, year after year after year, raises legitimate doubts on this side of the House about your ability to implement it.

The pattern of announcements followed by delays or partial execution has become all too familiar. The lack of any population strategy to accompany this Budget makes me fear that we are growing with no real plan for Islanders.

Let's talk about budget promises. One would think that if you're actually putting money in the Budget for some program or some project that it would be a sure thing, but over and over and over, this government has proven that that is not the case. The list of initiatives that this government promised and failed to deliver continues to grow.

[2:40 p.m.]

Here are some examples:

Making substantial progress on the construction of the mental health campus, especially the Hillsborough Hospital replacement: fail;

Adding air conditioning units for all patient areas and rooms of the existing Hillsborough Hospital: fail;

Replacing the Summerside Harbourside Medical Centre building: that didn't happen;

Repairing or replacing the Kings County Hospital: don't see that happening;

Improving ventilation in Island schools – critical, especially those without mechanical ventilation: hasn't happened;

Last but not least by any means, building public and affordable housing units to keep up with our growing population: massive fail.

This latest Budget holds few surprises. Government is well aware of the areas that it needs to improve. They're the same as they were last year and the year before and the year before that. Unfortunately, you'll also find that their number one priority, or at least their most costly priority, remains that age-old political promise of paving roads.

Paving is still the number one spending capital priority of this government. This Budget plans to spend \$250 million over the next five years on highways and bridges. On top of that, this government has consistently underestimated and overspent in this area. I represent a rural district.

Of course, I understand how important paving is and the maintenance of all of our roads. However, all this government has done is given Islanders smooth roads to drive on with nowhere to go. Those roads don't lead to a family doctor's office for many, many Islanders. Those roads don't lead to acute mental health services for them or their loved ones. Those roads don't lead to stores where they can actually afford to buy what they need. Those roads sometimes don't even lead to a place where Islanders can call home.

The next big-ticket items – education, housing, and health care – are unfortunately all areas in which this government consistently underspends. Although the

increase in funding is positive on paper, and I welcome it, we see year over year after year that this government fails to spend a large portion of these funds. Just based on last year's budget, this government underspent – underspent – \$30 million in these three areas. Overspent roads \$30 million; underspent in all these areas \$30 million. So, what gives Islanders hope that these new, shiny increases will actually be spent?

The issue of underspending and poorly managed funds does not seem to translate to paving. The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, as I just said, overspent \$30 million last year; \$30 million underspent on housing, health care, and education, \$30 million overspent on paving. If this government prioritized students, if it prioritized homes, if it prioritized health care for all Islanders, those numbers would be reversed. It's a shocking shame.

Government will tell you that building the mental health hospital and housing units takes time and it's difficult and that we are understaffed in our construction industry. I understand, of course, that we are challenged and understaffed in plenty of areas, but that's why it's up to government even more than ever to prioritize the areas that get attention.

I will not accept that the hospital or many new affordable housing units cannot be built. I drive by a new medical school that is well on its way after just being announced two years ago and breaking ground this year. Shovels had no time getting into the ground for that puppy. That's what government construction looks like when it is prioritized. That building could be a mental health hospital. That building could be providing housing for Islanders and continue to provide services that Islanders so desperately need.

I guess if it's not the Premier's legacy project like the medical school, it simply is not a priority. Shame on this government.

The only reason we have to have such a big spend on housing in this Budget is because for so many years, this government and its predecessors have failed to invest in housing here on Prince Edward Island. Don't pat yourselves on the back. This is only starting

to make up for years and years of inaction and outright negligence. This negligence has cost Islanders dearly and continues to cost Islanders dearly. Looking at the timidity of this Budget, it will continue to cost them dearly for some time to come.

[2:45 p.m.]

Tenants and homeowners alike are suffering. Vacancy rates continue to drop. Now we're in a situation where we need to protect renters because an eviction could mean homelessness. Homeowners or aspiring homeowners are also struggling. Vacancy rates on PEI pushed the housing prices to record levels recently, and now with interest rates climbing, many homeowners have the looming reality that their mortgage payments will be going up by hundreds and hundreds of dollars. Those who want to become homeowners have little hope. Prices are high, interest rates are high, and the number of options is low.

This is the government that has actively contributed to the housing crisis by failing to act: failing to act on a rental registry, failing to act on essential repairs and maintenance of the properties that they own and run, failing to act on the critical need for emergency shelters and transitional housing, failing to act on homelessness, failing to build public housing. Simply failing to act on the most critical issue facing Islanders today.

I have been calling this out for years that we need an aggressive population strategy with an associated plan for housing, health care, and education. If we have an aggressive population strategy without those plans, it's a recipe for disaster. The time to act was five or 10 or 15 years ago, but the second-best time to act, of course, is now.

This government has consistently underspent the budgeted amount for housing in most of the last fiscal years. In fact, today's Capital Budget forecasts significant underspending on housing construction in '23-24. Again, we've all heard the excuses related to the workforce. Don't get me wrong; our construction workforce is wonderful and they're doing everything they can. But I implore Islanders to look around at what's been built, and you'll see where

the priorities of this government actually lie. They're not with the needs of Islanders.

This is not to say that we don't need to address the construction workforce challenges. Of course, we do. Over the next five to 10 years, we need to build more housing than we could possibly accomplish, even if the government did prioritize it.

But here's the thing. Here's the thing. Building isn't the only option that we have to address the housing crisis. The Capital Budget could include investments for existing housing acquisition, immediate improvement, expansion in the housing market, which would open up access to federal funding programs that we have not yet tapped.

This government can and should be leveraging federal housing programs, Housing Corp assets, and regulatory changes to do several things: buy existing multi-unit properties, like the Charlottetown long-term rental properties currently being sold as condos; convert commercial space to residential; support modular homes, prefabs, and tiny homes; purchase existing rental properties as they come on the market; provide co-operative housing options. There's so much this government could be doing and has not done and is not doing.

So, yes, government will boast that it plans to start, complete, or initiate – initiate, I'm not even sure what that means – 560 housing units over the next five years. Sure, that sounds good at first blush, but the reality is that we all know we need to build over 2,000 new housing units every year just to keep up with our growing population. So, forgive me if I hold my applause for this so-called bold plan that will build a measly 5 percent of the housing Islanders desperately need over the next few years.

How could we possibly forget the infamous shovels in the ground on day one that the Premier promised for our mental health hospital? I'm not sure if I know a statement that has haunted a political leader more.

Unfortunately, the trend on announcing key health care initiatives with zero follow-through has become a real problem for this government. For the fifth straight year in a row, we have millions invested in mental

health capital. Perhaps we should finally find it comforting that this government has stopped pretending and didn't even include the hospital in their last platform or any mental health and addiction priorities in the most recent ministerial mandate letters.

Year after year, this government has failed Islanders by failing to deliver on these crucial health projects. Government says that health care is a top priority, but let's be clear: when your actions fall short for Islanders struggling every day to get care and for health care workers feeling burnt out and disrespected while keeping the system together, it's little more than another story.

[2:50 p.m.]

We don't underspend on pavement or fail to complete road projects. In health care, if it was a priority for this government, we wouldn't have just last week considered where recruited health care workers were coming from. Where are they going to live? What a shame.

If health and wellness was a priority for this government, then they would have learned from COVID and invested in long-term care.

Speaker: Hon. member

P. Bevan-Baker: Madam Speaker.

Speaker: I'd just like to say you've gone over your time by quite a bit. You get half the time of the hon. minister. If you'd like to just wrap up, that would be great.

P. Bevan-Baker: My apologies, Madam Speaker. I have, of course, no way of anticipating how long the minister's speech was. My apologies, Madam Speaker. I will wrap up.

So, what would our priorities be? Our population is growing rapidly. This can and should inform what government prioritizes and how much it allocates in all areas. Paving is great to have – I mean, we need roads, for sure we do – but a responsible government would provide for people's basic needs first. We would give Islanders what they need at the end of those roads.

Everybody needs shelter to survive. It's a human right that far too many people struggle with, so housing must be a top priority. You should be spending far more on housing than you are on paving.

Health care is critical to the wellbeing of all Islanders. You should be spending more on health care than you are on paving.

Our students and educational staff deserve schools that are safe and are not overcrowded. We should be spending far more on education than we are on paving.

Our economy succeeds when people are safe, healthy, and housed. Simply growing the population without providing for the increased needs is false economic success.

We need a government that welcomes people to our Island and that provides for everyone. Unfortunately, this Budget gives me little hope that this government has learned anything in the last four years. A government can't just throw money at projects and hope for the best. A real, grown-up, competent government would have a vision and a plan for this province; one that extends beyond election cycles and pet projects.

Sadly for Islanders, that's not the government that we have, and this disappointing, uninspiring Budget proves once again that this is a reactive government built on spin, storytelling, and very little substance.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I apologize for going over.

Reports by Committees

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As Chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges, I beg leave to introduce the second report of the said committee entitled Private Bill No. 200.

Pursuant to Rule 110(5) of the *Rules of the Legislative Assembly*, I will be moving the

motion for adoption of the report tomorrow, Wednesday, November 22nd.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point, that the report be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Introduction of Government Bills

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

Hon. R. Lantz: Madam Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Planning Act (No. 2)*, and I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 40, *An Act to Amend the Planning Act (No. 2)*, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. minister, do you have an explanation?

Hon. R. Lantz: This act will amend the *Planning Act* to better define persons or groups who can appeal decisions in relation to development permits and approvals of subdivisions, resort developments, or change of use applications. The introduction of these amendments is expected to support the timely development of housing and reduce wait times for these important decisions.

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the 18th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 18, *An Act to Amend the Real Property Tax Act*, Bill No. 39, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 39, *An Act to Amend the Real Property Tax Act*, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. 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: Thank you, minister.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

[2:55 p.m.]

[B. Trivers in the chair]

Chair: The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Real Property Tax Act*.

Would you like a stranger on the floor?

Hon. J. Burrige: Yes, please.

Chair: Shall it carry? Granted.

Alright. Thank you, minister, and stranger, if you just want to state your name and position into the microphone.

Ryan Pineau: Ryan Pineau, the provincial tax commissioner.

Chair: Thanks, Ryan.

Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read section by section?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Chair: Alright.

Would the promoter like to commence with a general statement of the bill's intent?

Hon. J. Burridge: I can. This amendment will introduce an owner-occupied residential tax credit to net their provincial property taxes payable down to the amount that they would have been if they had reset their assessment to December 31st, 2020 values as long as at December 31st, 2023. This has the effect of removing a large increase in provincial property taxes from the owner-occupied properties, which have been subsidized in 2022 and 2023.

It also includes a tax credit on long-term multi-unit rental properties to net their provincial property taxes payable down to the amount that they would have been if they had reset their assessment to December 31st, 2022 values as at December 31st, 2023, and this has the effect of removing provincial tax increases for 2023, the year in which the rental rate increases were capped at zero percent.

Chair: Alright, thank you.

Any questions, members?

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West
Royalty.

G. McNeilly: So, are we on section 1.5(5)?

Chair: Yes, section 1 of Bill No. 39.

G. McNeilly: Okay. So, (a), occupied residence – hello, Ryan, how are you?

We're bringing the property taxes down to 2020 levels, correct?

Ryan Pineau: So, the perfect way to do it would be if we could just reset the assessment right back to 2020, and that's very easy to explain to taxpayers. The reality is that's not easy from a tax administration point of view, and that's because assessment is something that we do for more than one purpose. Part of our obligations, for example, under the federal equalization formula, is to assess our properties at market value. We can't just go out and reduce those rates.

What we will be doing is introducing a tax credit, which has the effect of doing that. What we will do is look at essentially the value of your taxes coming into 2024, look at them, what they would have been like had

the assessment rates been reset at 2020, rolling over into 2024, and applying a tax credit on it for the difference to bring that provincial tax payable down, essentially, to the amount that it would have been had those assessment levels been reset.

G. McNeilly: I must have missed that part in my tax course this year, but I'll try. So, you have an assessed rate now in 2024; now we're going back to – typically, if I said a house was \$350,000, can you take it over from there?

Ryan Pineau: Mental math. If we look at what has happened since December 31st, 2020, in 2021, for owner-occupied properties that are capped at a CPI level increase, 2020's CPI was zero percent, so there was no increase in taxable assessments in 2021.

[3:00 p.m.]

In 2022, where we, again, looked at CPI for the prior year, 2021's CPI was 5.1 percent, and we actually cap out at 5 percent in terms of what our growth on the assessment value is. So, assessments went up by 5 percent in 2022. But a one-time subsidy was applied in 2022 to effectively remove that tax payable increase so that your taxes stayed the same.

In 2023, it went up by another 5 percent. Over the period from 2020 until now in 2023, effectively you've had a 5 percent, and then a 5 percent on top of the 5 percent, so a little over a 10 percent increase in that value from the 2022 to December 31st, 2023. On your \$350,000 house, assessment has gone up by about \$35,000.

What this credit will do is effectively look at 2024 as if we're back at that \$350,000 in 2020. That's the value at 2023 rolling over into 2024, and apply a credit on there so that your taxes payable only actually go up in line with where it would have been had we started back at 2020. It pulls the last two years of growth in taxes payable out of the assessment.

G. McNeilly: Are there any exceptions at all to this?

Ryan Pineau: The credit in 5.5 in section is for owner-occupied properties. These are properties that are owned and occupied by

the same person; essentially your principal residence. Those are the ones that are – within our *Real Property Assessment Act* – that are capped at that CPI increase. They're the ones that have had that impact from a CPI increase over the last two years.

G. McNeilly: I'm just thinking about if you were to buy a condo at Waterview Heights right now. You buy a condo, it was a rental property, they bought a condo; what happens in that situation right now? Do they get a tax credit?

Ryan Pineau: If you bought that condo in 2023 and were occupying it as your primary residence – so it's no longer a rental, it's your primary residence – then this credit could have an impact on you for 2024. But it's not going to go back to 2020 because you only bought the property in 2023 in that example. We're only going to go back to the point of purchase if it's between that December 31st, 2020 and 2023. It would be a limited impact in that situation.

G. McNeilly: Okay. Enforcement is hard when you're talking about people who have bought a condo and they might rent it out. How do we patrol that? As soon as they rent that unit out, they lose the tax credit.

Ryan Pineau: That's right. That's on a self-reported basis. Whenever they first buy that unit, they will report to us on their affidavit of purchase whether it's their owner-occupied residence or not.

G. McNeilly: But if they report to you – I've always wondered this – how do we enforce that? If they report to you – it's unenforceable. It's happening in Prince Edward Island. People are reporting to you, but things are different in the real world.

Ryan Pineau: Different methods. One is we look at other properties that they own at that point in time. If it's the only property they own, we generally are going to take them at their word. If they own more than one property, then we have to get into a conversation with them. Over time, those shifts are a harder one to track. We do special projects to look at whether there's a long-term renter in there or not.

One of the things that we look at is the licensed tourist accommodations. Is

somebody applying to rent that property out? Well, if they're renting it out and getting a license for it, it's probably not an owner-occupied property.

So different things like that are parameters that we can use to double-check that.

G. McNeilly: Thank you.

Chair: We'll come back to you, member.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: My questions have been answered. Thank you.

Chair: Okay, thank you.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Winsloe.

Z. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

And if this is not the section for it – with the municipal taxing structure like used in the City of Charlottetown, this doesn't affect the municipal tax structure at all?

Ryan Pineau: Correct. One of the reasons that we didn't actually roll back assessments from 2023 to 2020 is because assessed value is what rolls into that municipal taxation calculation. If we were to roll back our assessments from 2023 to 2020, it would actually have an impact on the municipal tax base as well, which was not part of the plan.

Z. Bell: Okay. I'm good with that. Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, did you still have questions?

G. McNeilly: Oh no, I'm good for now.

Chair: I had a question.

Ryan Pineau: Sure.

Chair: I just wanted to check. I know the definition of owner-occupied residential property is a very strict one. It's obviously not in this bill, but in the bill that's being amended. If I were to renovate the basement of my house and rent that out as a basement

apartment, would that still qualify me for the tax credit?

[3:05 p.m.]

Ryan Pineau: We have had this discussion in the past. Essentially, if it's a single contained dwelling unit – if that basement unit is actually a separate unit all together, that can be resided in and of itself – that can actually qualify separate and apart from the other part of the property. When we look at the owner-occupied, we're actually looking at dwelling units. A property can have more than one dwelling unit in it and really, what that boils down to is the ability to have a self-contained living residence.

On a duplex, for example, it's two family units. You only live in half. You could get the owner-occupied on the half that you live in but not on the rented half, for example. With the basement unit example, if it's part and parcel to the rest of the house, where there is a shared kitchen, shared bathroom, that kind of thing, that wouldn't be a single dwelling unit accommodation, so that would not qualify if you're renting out part of that space. But if it is a self-contained unit, separate and of itself, then it could potentially qualify.

Chair: Thank you for bearing with me here. If I were to rent out a room in my house and I'm sharing the kitchen and perhaps bathroom and other amenities in the house with the renter of that room, you're saying that me as the owner of the house would not be eligible for the tax credit?

Ryan Pineau: Correct.

Chair: Okay. Of course, my concerns – and we've talked about this before – are that we're providing a disincentive for people to do things like rent out a room in their house because they say: I rent out a room and I don't qualify for the tax credit. It's a fairly significant tax credit.

I guess my question is, did you take that into account when you were creating this legislation to try and find a way to...?

Ryan Pineau: That requirement for the owner-occupied properties actually resides within the *Real Property Assessment Act*, not within the *Real Property Tax Act*. The

way we structured this credit in order to get at the people that were impacted by these increases that were subsidized over the last two years is to tie back into that program and grab that same pool of impacted people. So, no, we haven't had a discussion around changes to the *Real Property Assessment Act* as part of this. That will form part of another discussion around the assessment process.

Chair: I just want to say for the record, I would definitely love to see those sorts of changes because I do feel it is a bit of a disincentive. Thank you for looking at that in the future.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West
Royalty.

G. McNeilly: If things go astray with some of the examples that I made, how are people disciplined? If you find that something's out of whack with the reporting, how do people get punished or whatnot?

Ryan Pineau: Well, I wouldn't call it punished, but we remove the credit at that point in time or remove them from various programs that are available to owner-occupied properties. It's not solely this program. There is also the owner-occupied assessment program, which is that program that caps your assessment increase at CPI. They would get essentially removed from all of those programs at that point in time.

G. McNeilly: Does the Province go after the difference?

Ryan Pineau: We don't go back before the change in assessment.

G. McNeilly: We're talking about 2024, I think. What happens as we move on in 2025? Does this still exist?

Ryan Pineau: This is set up to be a go-forward credit. It's for 2024 and years thereafter. This credit will be calculated in 2024. The credit itself won't change on a go-forward basis; it will stay at the same amount because it's designed to capture that growth in '22 and '23, but that value will essentially sit on your account on a go-forward basis, if you don't sell or move out of your house.

The new owner in the future, post-2024, they wouldn't be able to get to this credit. It's designed for the people that were impacted by inflation that couldn't budget for it, essentially, versus a new owner who takes those property taxes into account in that equation.

On a go-forward basis, I guess it becomes a matter of whether we change our enforcement techniques to account for this new credit. What we'll probably do is look at additional sampling to look for those properties.

[3:10 p.m.]

G. McNeilly: It's a good thing. I'm just thinking about everybody else who doesn't have a – they're not able to be here. For example, are there tax considerations – I know it's not in this bill but because this is done, do we consider renters that have been renting and their monetary value in their property has gone up, their taxes have gone up? Is there anything going to be looked at for renters in the near future? (Indistinct)

Ryan Pineau: We do have in the next section a credit that ties into multi-units. That doesn't have a direct impact on renters but does have, I guess, if you think it forward, kind of a long-term impact in that the landlord expense structure is lower. So, whenever they're looking at allowable increases, that will get taken into account in terms of how much they're able to increase rent. That is the next step.

Chair: Just to be clear, there are two sections in the bill. We're debating section 1 which contains the bulk of the bill, and then section 2 would be the act comes into force. You can (Indistinct) ask questions on the entire section –

G. McNeilly: No, I'll ask these questions on the next section.

So, that's an indirect, hopeful – kind of government saying let's be hopeful that they do that?

Ryan Pineau: Right. Unfortunately, in the *Real Property Tax Act*, we deal with property owners. We don't have a tie-in direct to renters.

G. McNeilly: Yeah. Thank you very much.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Section 2.

Question on section 2?

G. McNeilly: Well, we just kind of chatted about that. Is there anything else that you'd want to add on that, or section 2 –

Ryan Pineau: I would just note there are some small differences in the credit for section 2. Section 2 is a new credit for multi-dwelling accommodation units; essentially, for long-term rentals in a building where there's more than one unit. So, you have a rental unit in that building.

The credit that's going to be developed in this one isn't a rollback to 2020. It's a rollback to 2022, effectively taking that 2023 taxation year increase off the table where rental rates were frozen at zero percent in terms of the allowable increase.

The 5.6 credit for multi-unit dwellings will effectively give a tax credit to offset the increase that happened during 2023, bringing that out of the equation on that year where there was no allowable increase available.

So again, that's where that tie-in to – on the longer term, that expense structure for the landlord is lower when they're going for an over-allowable increase or factored into the allowable increase that is approved for all units.

Chair: Just to be clear, we're going section by section, and there are only two sections in this bill. We've already carried everything up to section 2, which is: "This Act comes into force on January 1st, 2024."

Ryan Pineau: Oh, sorry. I thought section 2 started at the 5.6. I apologize.

Chair: No, that's fine. I was trying to clarify that.

Hon. Member from Charlottetown-West
Royalty, if you do have a question, I'll entertain it, though.

G. McNeilly: Thank you very much.

The government came in with zero percent. So, this is a way that government is trying to do something to offset that mistake?

Ryan Pineau: I would say that it's there to take into account the fact that there were no allowable increases during that period of time for those long-term rental units, while there were also some units that were impacted by property assessment increases. Not all; it's not like the owner-occupied program where there's an across the board, essentially, increase due to CPI.

Multi-unit rental dwellings are market based. So, some properties wouldn't have had an increase, but some would have had an increase during that 2023 period that wouldn't have been taken into account in terms of their allowable expense increase.

Chair: I'll allow one more question, hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

G. McNeilly: So, this is a problem that landlords came to you with and said, "Hey, our property tax has gone up. We weren't able to raise rental prices at all. We're upset here."

Ryan Pineau: I wouldn't say landlords came to me. I'm not sure if that's where the thrust of the credit came from, but as part of the rollback, that was part of the credit that we were asked to develop under the *Real Property Tax Act*.

G. McNeilly: So, again, take the Waterview Heights thing. I'm just trying to get my head around this. If somebody bought a condo in a multi-unit dwelling – so, a 16-unit place – what are the repercussions there? If they bought it last year, do they get the rollback for buying a condo in that facility?

Ryan Pineau: If that building which converted to a condo unit and that unit had sold to another owner during that 2020 to December 31st, 2023 period, it's that new owner who would be looking for an owner-occupied credit, not the prior owner. Not the multi-unit landlord owner; it would be the owner of the unit who would be looking for a credit under the 5.5 credit.

G. McNeilly: Alright. That's not going to sit well.

Chair: Shall section 2 carry? Carried.

Shall the bill carry? Carried.

[3:15 p.m.]

Hon. J. Burridge: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Real Property Tax Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. J. Burridge: I move the enacting clause.

Chair: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island as follows.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. J. Burridge: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

[Hon. D. Compton in the chair]

B. Trivers: Madam Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having had under consideration a bill to be intitled *An Act to Amend the Real Property Tax Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Hon. C. Deagle: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the 17th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 17, *Loan Act 2023*, Bill No. 38, ordered for second reading.

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

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 38, *Loan Act 2023*, read a second time.

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

Hon. C. Deagle: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. 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 Rustico-Emerald to chair Committee of the Whole House.

[B. Trivers in the chair]

Chair: The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *Loan Act 2023*.

Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be debated in general, as a whole?

Some Hon. Members: General questions.

Chair: Okay.

Would you like to bring a stranger on to the floor?

Hon. J. Burridge: Yes, please.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Alright, maybe just state your name and position for the record, please.

Jamie Horvat: Jamie Horvat, director of Pensions and Capital Management.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Can you explain the *Loan Act 2023* in the bill, basically, in general? Figure out what we're doing here.

Jamie Horvat: Okay. The *Loan Act 2023* gives the government the authority to assess additional long-term funding if needed to respond to unexpected events, as well as refinance any current debt obligations as they come due. That's the general purpose.

G. McNeilly: Is this something that regularly happens? You said if needed. Are we in a position that we need to do this now?

Jamie Horvat: No. The loan act is broad. We typically bring the loan act forward every year. You would remember there was one last year. There's a 2021 loan act outstanding, as well. It's really to help with the overall capital and operational budgets of the government and help with that planning because there's often a mismatch in cash versus accounts payable and accounts receivable and the cash outstanding, as well as a need for increased liquidity, especially ever since black swan events like COVID and the need for additional funding.

There is still appropriately \$50 million outstanding on *Loan Act 2021* and the full \$250 million on *Loan Act 2022*. This is just additional funding if and when we need to go to the markets.

G. McNeilly: The markets are in a very, very difficult position. Well, not difficult position, it's just that interest rates are high. Does that affect if we need to borrow? How will that play into, I mean, if we had to tap into this money?

[3:20 p.m.]

Jamie Horvat: Short-term rates have become higher more recently, but the longer-term rates, if you look at the yield curve – I brought my notes here just so I can speak to it. If you look out three, five, seven, 10 years, actually the longer-term rates are lower than the short-term rates right now. When we go to look to borrow, we'd be borrowing at 4.5, 4.7 percent, which is actually lower than some of the debt that's coming due over the next few years. We have \$60 million coming due at the end of the year that was done – I believe it was 8.5 percent, and we have another piece of debt coming due from prior issuances at 6.1 percent. So, actually, the 4.5 percent

environment in the market is lower than prior debt that was done by previous governments.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair. Thanks, Jamie, for being here.

Just some questions along the same lines as the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty. You say that a loan act is brought forward every year for the reasons that you've just described. Is \$250 million a typical figure, Jamie?

Jamie Horvat: Yeah, so the last few years, \$200-250 million has been the typical figure. It's really taken from the capital and operational budgeting plans based on current spending and potential deficit and operational budgets. We like to have a buffer there in case those funds are required. It's preplanning, really.

P. Bevan-Baker: Right. Can you explain how this loan act intersects with special warrants?

Jamie Horvat: Sure. Special warrants are authorized by the House through supplemental appropriations. Special warrants are really spelled out in the *Financial Administration Act* for authorized spending, and it has to be within the operational capital budget. It's really spending within a year which has to come to the House to get approved, whereas the loan act is for long-term debt and other obligations for spending, and the obligation is beyond a year.

There's a three-step process for that, as well. First, the House has to authorize the loan act for us to borrow, which is why I'm here, as you're aware. Second step is, we would have to go to the Executive Council, and the Minister of Finance would have to approve us to go to the market when the minister believes it's time appropriate to go to the market and do the borrowing. Then the third piece, after we actually go to market, we have to report back to the Executive Council on those terms of the borrowing. That would be recorded in the public accounts as the debenture is issued. It's a pretty public process.

P. Bevan-Baker: This is just my ignorance I'm displaying here, Jamie, but a special warrant, you just described it as being within the capital budget or operational budget that's approved here, but my understanding is that it's not, it's extra spending on top of that.

Jamie Horvat: Yeah. The *Financial Administration Act* outlines the process for the authorized spending, but it's really required when the House might not be in session and there's required excess spending of what the House has authorized, so at the next sitting of the House, the summary of the special warrants is brought back to the House for consideration and a vote, and then the House authorizes the special warrant. But it's within a 12-month window; it's really short-term financing.

P. Bevan-Baker: Right. Thanks for that, Jamie. I guess what I was trying to figure out in my own mind was how the passage of this bill, assuming it passes today, facilitates the issuing of money for special warrants until the House comes back to approve it. Is this where –

Jamie Horvat: No, they're two separate things.

P. Bevan-Baker: Two separate, okay. Thank you for that.

I'm good on this. Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Okay. Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. J. Burridge: I move the title.

Chair: *Loan Act 2023.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. J. Burridge: I move the enacting clause.

Chair: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island as follows.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. J. Burridge: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

[Hon. D. Compton in the chair]

[3:25 p.m.]

B. Trivers: Madam Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *Loan Act 2023*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the 11th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 11, *An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act (No. 2)*, Bill No. 26, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 26, *An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act (No. 2)*, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. 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 Rustico-Emerald to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

[B. Trivers in the chair]

Chair: The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act (No. 2)*.

Would you like to bring a stranger on the floor?

Hon. J. Burrige: Yes, please.

Chair: Granted? Granted.

Would you like to give an overview of the bill, or would you wait for your stranger?

Hon. J. Burrige: Not a big overview. A lot of this is housekeeping and language; department names, reporting entities. It's a lot of housekeeping.

Chair: Alright. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be debated as a whole?

P. Bevan-Baker: Yes, Chair.

Chair: Stranger, would you like to introduce yourself for the record?

Judy Killam: Sure. I'm Judy Killam. I'm the comptroller in the Department of Finance.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I have very little. I'm happy that this is the updating of the words, of the gender pronouns, but I just have one question. The act sets out a new Schedule "B" which includes a list of Crown corporations. Is there any reason why a newer entity – like the School Food Program, for example, which is a Crown corporation – is not included in that list?

Judy Killam: That's a good question, but these are departments and other Crown corporations of government. When did the school entity come into play? Because it hasn't been on my radar.

P. Bevan-Baker: I'm not certain of that. It's fairly recent. I'm not sure if the minister is present. I couldn't answer that question. I just wondered if there's a good reason why it's not present.

Judy Killam: Typically, these would represent organizations that are consolidated into government's financial statements, and I don't believe that that one is consolidated. It's a separate entity from government, I believe.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay, alright. I guess I'll —

Judy Killam: If you want a better answer than that, I can get back to you.

P. Bevan-Baker: Oh, no. That's a better answer than the question, I think. Thank you.

I'm good, Chair. Thanks.

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Shall Schedule "A" carry? Carried.

Shall Schedule "B" carry? Carried.

Hon. J. Burridge: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act (No. 2).*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. J. Burridge: I move the enacting clause.

Chair: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island as follows.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. J. Burridge: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

[3:30 p.m.]

[Hon. D. Compton in the chair]

B. Trivers: Madam Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act (No. 2)*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

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

I'm seeking unanimous consent to proceed to second reading on Bill No. 40, *An Act to Amend the Planning Act (No. 2)*, which was introduced for first reading today.

Speaker: Does the minister have unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: No.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I'm seeking unanimous consent to proceed to debate in Committee of the Whole House on the capital expenditure.

Speaker: Does the minister have unanimous consent?

An Hon. Member: No.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General, try again.

Hon. B. Thompson: Plan C.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the 1st order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 1, *An Act to Amend the Roads Act*, Bill No. 10, ordered for third reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the said bill be now read a third time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 10, *An Act to Amend the Roads Act*, read a third time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the said bill do now pass.

Speaker: Hon. members, this is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do pass.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary-minded, “nay.”

The bill is carried.

The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Housing, Land and Communities, that the 2nd order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 2, *An Act to Amend the International Commercial Arbitration Act*, Bill No. 8, ordered for third reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Housing, Land and Communities, that the said bill be now read a third time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 8, *An Act to Amend the International Commercial Arbitration Act*, read a third time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Housing, Land and Communities, that the said bill do now pass.

Speaker: This is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do pass.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary-minded, “nay.”

The bill is carried.

The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

[3:35 p.m.]

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population, that the 3rd order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 3, *Arbitration Act*, Bill No. 9, ordered for third reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population, that the said bill be now read a third time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 9, *Arbitration Act*, read a third time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population, that the said bill do now pass.

Speaker: This is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do pass.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary-minded, “nay.”

The bill is carried.

The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Social Development and Seniors, that the 4th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 4, *An Act to Amend the Highway Signage Act*, Bill No. 11, ordered for third reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Social Development and Seniors, that the said bill be now read a third time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 11, *An Act to Amend the Highway Signage Act*, read a third time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Social Development and Seniors, that the said bill do now pass.

Speaker: This is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do pass.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary-minded, “nay.”

The bill is carried.

The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Social Development and Seniors, that the 5th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 5, *An Act to Amend the Archaeology Act*, Bill No. 27, ordered for third reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Social Development and Seniors, that the said bill be now read a third time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 27, *An Act to Amend the Archaeology Act*, read a third time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Social Development and Seniors, that the said bill do now pass.

Speaker: This is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do pass.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary, “nay.”

The bill is carried.

The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action, that the 6th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 6, *An Act to Amend the Agricultural Insurance Act*, Bill No. 25, ordered for third reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action, that the said bill be now read a third time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 25, *An Act to Amend the Agricultural Insurance Act*, read a third time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action, that the said bill do now pass.

Speaker: This is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do pass.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary-minded, “nay.”

The bill is carried.

The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, that the 7th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

[3:40 p.m.]

Clerk: Order No. 7, *An Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act (No. 2)*, Bill No. 22, ordered for third reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, that the said bill be now read a third time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 22, *An Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act (No. 2)*, read a third time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, that the said bill do now pass.

Speaker: This is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do pass.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary-minded, “nay.”

The bill is carried.

The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of

Social Development and Seniors, that the 8th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 8, *An Act to Amend the Police Act (No. 2)*, Bill No. 30, ordered for third reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Social Development and Seniors, that the said bill be now read a third time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 30, *An Act to Amend the Police Act (No. 2)*, read a third time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Social Development and Seniors, that the said bill do now pass.

Speaker: This is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do pass.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary-minded, “nay.”

The bill is carried.

The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action, that the 9th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 9, *Government Reorganization Act*, Bill No. 24, order for third reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action, that the said bill be now read a third time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Government Reorganization Act*, Bill No. 24, read a third time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action, that the said bill do now pass.

Speaker: This is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do pass.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary-minded, “nay.”

The bill is carried.

The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population, that the 12th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 12, *An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act*, Bill No. 31, ordered for third reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Workforce, Advanced Learning and

Population, that the said bill be now read a third time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 31, *An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act*, read a third time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population, that the said bill do now pass.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

This is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do pass.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary-minded, “nay.”

The bill is carried.

The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population, that the 13th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 13, *An Act to Amend the Amusement Devices Act*, Bill No. 29, ordered for third reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population, that the said bill be now read a third time.

[3:45 p.m.]

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 29, *An Act to Amend the Amusement Devices Act*, read a third time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population, that the said bill do now pass.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

This is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do pass.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary-minded, “nay.”

The bill is carried.

The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

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

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Education and Early Years, that the 14th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 14, *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act*, Bill No. 37, ordered for third reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Education and Early Years, that the said bill be now read a third time.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 37, *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act*, read a third time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Education and Early Years, that the said bill do now pass.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

This is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do pass.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary-minded, “nay.”

The bill is carried.

The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action, that the 16th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 16, *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act*, Bill No. 36, ordered for third reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action, that the said bill be now read a third time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 36, *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act*, read a third time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action, that the said bill do now pass.

Speaker: This is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do pass.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary-minded, “nay.”

The bill has carried.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

M. MacKay: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

At this time, we would like to pass over our remaining time to the official opposition.

Orders Other Than Government

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, that the 21st order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 21, *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*, Bill No. 106, in Committee.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, 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 Rustico-Emerald to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

[3:50 p.m.]

[B. Trivers in the chair]

Chair: The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*, Bill No. 106.

Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill now be read clause by clause?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Chair: Alright. We are at clause 1, and there was a lot of debate on that.

Would you like to bring a stranger on the floor?

Hon. H. Perry: I would like to bring a stranger on the floor, please.

Chair: Shall it be granted? Granted.

Alright. Clause 1, in fact, has been carried.

We are now debating clause 2.

May I have the stranger just introduce yourself for the record?

Robert Godfrey: My name is Robert Godfrey, and I am the director of policy and research for the Office of the Official Opposition.

Chair: Alright, clause 2. Any questions?

Shall it carry? Carried.

Clause 3.

Hon. H. Perry: Chair?

Chair: Yes, member?

Hon. H. Perry: I have an amendment I would like to bring forward. I do have copies. I'll read it into Hansard.

Moved that

Subsection 3(3) of Bill 106 is amended by the deletion of the proposed subsection 22.2(8) and the substitution of the following:

Carrying unused leave forward

(8) Each day of earned paid sick leave that an employee does not take in a calendar year shall be carried forward to the subsequent calendar year to be counted toward the maximum entitlement of five days referred to in subsection (7), for that subsequent calendar year.

Chair: Thank you, member.

In fact, I believe when the bill was on the floor last time, the copies were distributed of the amendment, so everybody should already have it. Does anybody else need a copy of this amendment now?

Alright. An amendment has been moved. Debate on the amendment?

M. MacKay: Can we just get another copy of that amendment?

[3:55 p.m.]

Chair: Sure. The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque has asked for another copy.

Who else needs one? Just raise your hand if you need a copy.

Alright, debate on the amendment then. Does anyone have any questions?

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

Hon. S. Myers: Could we just an explanation of the amendment for a refresher?

Chair: Great. Go ahead.

Hon. H. Perry: (Indistinct) Basically, what we brought this forward to was – the way it had stood in our first piece of legislation was that each day of paid sick leave an employee does not take in a calendar year is not to be carried forward for the following calendar year, but we need to ensure the way the process works on it so that they can only get up to a maximum but they don't lose any of

those up to five as the calendar year turns over.

Hon. S. Myers: Once you get your five, you would carry them.

Hon. H. Perry: Yes.

Hon. S. Myers: But you wouldn't carry more than that?

Hon. H. Perry: No.

Robert Godfrey: Yes, that's right. It would ensure that you wouldn't have to work an additional 180 days to qualify for one again. It would ensure that every year you would begin with five. You would never get any more than that and you'd never get –

Hon. S. Myers: It doesn't reset to zero.

Robert Godfrey: That's right. (Indistinct) reset to zero.

Chair: Any further debate on the amendment?

Alright.

Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: No.

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Chair: I'll do a quick count.

All those in favour of the amendment, say "aye."

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Chair: All those against the amendment, say "nay".

Some Hon. Members: Nay!

Chair: The nays have it. The amendment has been defeated.

We're still debating clause 3.

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

Hon. J. Redmond: I have an amendment I would like to propose for clause 3. I also have copies.

Chair: Great. Excellent. Ava could probably distribute them for you.

Hon. J. Redmond: I don't have – they were getting them for us.

Chair: Okay, we'll distribute them as soon as (Indistinct). Go ahead.

Hon. J. Redmond: Thank you.

Moved that

1. Subsection 3(3) of Bill No. 106 is amended

(a) in the proposed subsection 22.2(4),

(i) by the deletion of the words “, other than an employee in a seasonal, temporary job,”,

(ii) by the deletion of the words “90 days” and the substitution of the words “six months”, and

(iii) by the deletion of the words “subsection (7)” and the substitution of the words “subsection (6)”.

b) in the proposed subsection 22.2(5), by the deletion of the words “for the day an amount determined by the formula $A \times B$ where A is the number of days in the period of leave; and B is”;

c) in the proposed clause 22.2(6)(a)

(i) by the deletion of the words “90 days” and the substitution of the words “six months”, and

(ii) by the deletion of the words “three days” and the substitution of the words “one day”.

d) in the proposed clause 22.2(6)(b), by the deletion of the words “180 days” and the substitution of the words “twelve months”;

e) in the proposed section 22.2(7), by the deletion of the word “five” and the substitution of the word “three”; and

f) by the deletion of the proposed subsections 22.2(11), (12) and (13).

Chair: Alright, members. We are still waiting for that amendment to get copies distributed. We're going to take a short recess while we get the copies and that going.

[The Committee recessed from 3:59 p.m. to 4:01 p.m.]

Chair: The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*.

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

Hon. J. Redmond: My apologies. We're getting copies here. I kind of got mixed up here.

With the permission of the committee, I would like to retract what I just read to read the copy that they have in front of them.

Chair: Okay, so the amendment you moved is not the one that is represented by the copies? Would you like to retract it?

Hon. J. Redmond: The one I just read. Right.

Chair: Okay, so you retract that statement?

Hon. J. Redmond: Correct.

Chair: Okay, very good. I'm not sure what the proper – it is on the floor. Maybe what I'll ask is for the committee to vote that one down.

Oh, do I have unanimous consent to retract that? So, what happened, members, for those who might not have been paying close attention, there was an amendment moved by the hon. Minister of Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population. It does not match the copies that were handed out, so she wants to withdraw her oral amendment and would require unanimous consent to do that.

Do we have unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Chair: Okay. Minister, you wanted now to introduce the amendment that does match the copies that have been distributed?

Hon. J. Redmond: The one that they have, yes.

Chair: Okay, go ahead, minister.

Hon. J. Redmond: Moved that

1. Subsection 3(3) of Bill No. 106 is amended

(a) in the proposed subsection 22.2(4),

(i) by the deletion of the words “; other than an employee in a seasonal, temporary job,”,

(ii) by the deletion of the words “90 days” and the substitution of the words “twelve months”, and

(iii) by the deletion of the words “subsection (7)” and the substitution of the words “subsection (6)”;

(b) in the proposed subsection 22.2(5), by the deletion of the words “for the day an amount determined by the formula $A \times B$ where A is the number of days in the period of leave; and B is”;

(c) in the proposed subsection 22.2(6), by the deletion of clauses (a) and (b) and the substitution of the following:

(a) after twelve months of continuous employment with the same employer, one day of paid sick leave;

(b) after 24 months of continuous employment with the same employer, one additional day of paid sick leave; and

(c) after 36 months of continuous employment with the same employer, one additional day of paid sick leave.

(d) in the proposed clause 22.2(6)(b), by the deletion of the words “180 days” and the substitution of the words “twelve months”;

(e) in the proposed subsection 22.2(7), by the deletion of the word “five” and the substitution of the word “three”; and

(f) by the deletion of the proposed subsections 22.2(11), (12) and (13).

Chair: Thank you, minister. Are there any questions?

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West
Royalty.

G. McNeilly: I would like to ask the mover of the bill, how does this help employees of Prince Edward Island?

Chair: Member, this is an amendment to the bill.

G. McNeilly: Amendment, sorry.

Chair: Minister.

Hon. J. Redmond: Thank you very much. Thank you for the question.

[4:05 p.m.]

Through the comprehensive review, there was a lot of conversation and debate, and a lot of consultation between workers and employers on getting to that balanced approach so that we can have a healthy, sustainable workforce.

The recommendation came back as three days. Originally, the recommendation that came from the comprehensive review was longer periods of time in between. We certainly want to recognize that there are more illnesses happening and bring those times up closer together to ensure that we can provide something that's balanced for both workers and employers.

G. McNeilly: I'll ask the mover of the amendment: You are the minister. Why did you move it from 180 days to a year?

Hon. J. Redmond: It is a good question. Thank you.

We do want to respond a bit also to the comprehensive review and give that validation to the research and consultation that went into that. We want – again, like we've said – to present that balanced ability in the workforce and to help provide opportunity and time for those businesses, too, to support this. We also want them to be able to support their workers in a managed

way. We felt, from that review, this would be the best approach.

G. McNeilly: I understand there was a review, but I know there was a lot of consultation going and I know there's a lot of sickness and different issues going around Prince Edward Island. This doesn't seem to reflect what was happening for the last two or three years with being able to provide sick time for people in Prince Edward Island. I just don't understand why you waited – 36 months. How it works, I think, is you get one day, two days, and then three days in a 36-month plan. Is that correct?

Hon. J. Redmond: I want to also keep in mind that this is the minimum standard. Currently, 65 percent of our employers and workforce do provide something higher than what we have right now that are being provided. We want to set that minimum standard. We do want to make it so that it is helpful to those who are ill, but we also need to keep in mind the smaller businesses and those this might be more applicable to, how they would help support that.

Chair: Alright, I'll come back to you.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like you maybe to explain something to me. It takes one year to get one sick day, but there's no carryover, so they may never get a sick day.

Hon. J. Redmond: The intention is, after a year of work, you get the one sick day, and then you'll build from there. They would ultimately earn up to three days with continuous work with that employer. It would not be just one day.

K. Bernard: That doesn't make any sense at all. Why is government proposing paid sick days that would be some of the least generous of any provinces? I don't understand why you would change it to this point. It doesn't make any sense, it's not helping Islanders when we know what they need, and you're coming with one day that they may not even get.

Hon. J. Redmond: Currently, they don't have any paid sick days, so we are looking to implement some paid sick time.

It is the minimum standard, and we have been looking across jurisdictions to see what others are doing. We do want to make it affordable and with the ability for business owners to be able to provide this for their employees.

After one year, the employees earn one paid sick day. With continuous work with that employer, they would earn more time, which is sustaining that worker staying with that organization. We are going to continue to work with both employers and workers. We do want to make that balanced approach. We want to provide that opportunity to have that.

K. Bernard: So, balanced approach: I have a job, I'm working there for a year, and I don't use a sick day. I'm sick on February 2nd, but I don't have a sick day because it never carried over, and I have to wait 12 months to get another sick day?

Hon. J. Redmond: No.

K. Bernard: That's what you're saying.

Hon. J. Redmond: No, no. After the one day –

K. Bernard: That's what you just said.

Hon. J. Redmond: If you are switching employers. If you're with the same employer, you would have that one sick day, and after two years, you would gain the second one. So, you would still have that if you've never used it.

Chair: Promoter.

Hon. H. Perry: Chair, there are actually nowhere in there that actually state that. We just put an amendment forward that said that these days could be carried over, and you guys voted it down. So, can you explain to me how that's carried over?

Chair: So, promoter, that's a question to the mover of the amendment?

Hon. H. Perry: Yes.

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

[4:10 p.m.]

Hon. J. Redmond: The intention of the amendment is so that they would gain a sick day after each year of continuous employment. So, that would mean that they would keep that one day, not that it would be what was suggested before, like where they get five, ten, whatever (Indistinct). They would gain one after each year from continuous employment.

Hon. H. Perry: I'd just like to if you could explain that in a little more detail because you said it was insinuated, but I don't understand insinuated when it comes in terms of this legislation. How are those sick days carried over, and if they are carried over, what is the maximum? Where does it state the maximum that they can accumulate?

Hon. J. Redmond: After three years of work, they would have three sick days per year.

Robert Godfrey: We identified that, subsection (8), "each day of sick leave that an employee does not take in a calendar year is not to be carried forward to the following calendar year."

So, you would start at zero every single year, right? We identified that and put forward the amendment that we did to ensure that – in our case anyway – you would never get above five, you would never get below. If we're to follow your legislation without that amendment that we proposed, you wouldn't get any sick time. You'd have to re-qualify. You'd have to work that 12 months to get one, then 24 months to get two, then 36 months to get three. You would be starting over at zero every single January 1st. That's why –

Hon. J. Redmond: No, that's not –

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

Hon. J. Redmond: No, that's not the intention, is to put people –

Robert Godfrey: I understand that's not your intention. I'm telling you that if we accepted your amendment without ours, it doesn't actually achieve either one of our goals.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

This has been a bone of contention for both our bill and Bill 106. I've heard even political commentators talk about carryover in a way that they clearly don't understand the concept.

An Hon. Member: That's right.

P. Bevan-Baker: Let's imagine the Green bill. We would accumulate over the course of one year five paid sick days and, in our bill, you would carry that over to the next year. That does not mean after two years, you get 10 days, after three years, you get 15 days. Absolutely not. What happens on December 31st is that you have earned those five days because you've been working with that employer for a year.

With the Liberal bill – and if this amendment passes – you get one day at the end of the year, but on January 1st, it gets wiped out; it does not get carried over. On January 1st with our bill and minus this amendment, those days would stay there in your pot, in your sick days pot, and you can take those days. Otherwise, if there's no carryover on January 1st, you have zero sick days.

One of the implications of that is that towards the end of the year – and there was much debate here in the House last year and aspersions cast that Islanders would be gaming the system – that if you have five accumulated sick days in December but you know that you can't take them in January if you're sick, then there's a real incentive to use them. If you have a carryover, those sick days will be there for you in January and February, but you will never accumulate, again, in our bill – it's complicated because we're talking about multiple bills here – but if you have a bill that says within a year you will accumulate five days of sick days on January 1st, you have five days of sick days but you will never get more than that during

that year unless you take those days. Then you build up to five again.

It's complicated, but clearly, there's a number of people in this House that do not understand what the concept of carryover is and what the implications (Indistinct)

Chair: Thank you, member, for the clarification, but remember, we are debating the amendment to Bill 106 here today. I know you're using your bill as an example. That was on the floor previously. Did the mover of the amendment want to respond at all? Okay. No?

Promoter, would you like to ask –

Hon. H. Perry: But I think this is very important to have that clarity. We put an amendment forward to our bill; specifically, it talked about the carryover and how it works. It was voted down by these members. I need to be confident and I think Islanders need to be confident that what this government is proposing is clear. We're not getting any clarity on what carryover means to her in this amendment.

Chair: This is a question to the mover. You can choose to answer it, if you like.

Hon. J. Redmond: There's (Indistinct)

Chair: It sounds like there might be an intervention, too.

The hon. Minister of Housing, intervention.

[4:15 p.m.]

Hon. R. Lantz: I would just ask for some clarification, but I think that it's correct that there's some misunderstanding about the concept of carryover. You can't have a carryover without a ceiling.

In this case where I think the amendment is proposing no carryover, it's correct that the first year of employment you would have no paid sick day, but on the first day of your second year, you accrue that. You have to understand the difference between accruing an amount and carrying over an amount. On that first day, you've got a day of sick leave.

Now, if there was a carryover, if it was one day of carryover in your instance and you

accrue three – and you didn't use anything – you'd have three days on your second year. That's not what she's proposing. After three years you'd have three days of paid sick leave on the first day of every year from year three subsequent.

Chair: Thank you, Minister of Housing, Land and Communities.

Hon. R. Lantz: What I'm asking for is, that's my understanding, and I'm asking if that is correct.

Hon. J. Redmond: Yes.

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

Hon. J. Redmond: Yes.

Chair: Yes. Okay.

Hon. H. Perry: I need clarity on that, Chair. In here, it clearly states in their amendment after 12 months of continuous employment with the same employer, one day of paid sick leave after. It says after 12 months of continuous employment. How do you get one day from the start?

Hon. R. Lantz: One day at the start of the second year.

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

Hon. R. Lantz: My understanding: your first year of employment, you are not eligible for paid sick leave. In your second year, on the first day of your second year, you have a day of paid sick leave. (Indistinct) on the first day –

[Interjections]

Hon. H. Perry: (Indistinct) who put the amendment forward what the reason was for putting this forward and some clarity on that so that we can make a conscious decision or an informed decision on this and we need to have that clarity.

Chair: Okay. Thank you, member. I think we had an intervention to attempt to provide that clarity and we had the hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point attempt to provide clarity.

Mover of the amendment, did you want to add anything? Or are you good?

Hon. J. Redmond: Yeah, I'm good.

Chair: Okay. The mover is looking to let that rest. What's been said so far should be clear, I believe.

Promoter.

Hon. H. Perry: I have more questions. I have questions to the mover of the amendment. I know you're going, and you said you based it off of the employment standards review. Did you or your department consult with any of the stakeholders about this?

Hon. J. Redmond: Yes. So, our department did interact with some of the stakeholders as well through the consultation process; so, prior to this. The independent review, the folks that did the review consulted in person and through email and through phone consultations. Of course, like anything, paid sick leave was a fulsome conversation on what would work or how they could work together to both look after their workers and their employers. Then our department has had conversations as well to kind of get a good understanding of where the stakeholders are at and what they can do and such.

Chair: Promoter.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you, Chair. Have you had any follow-up with them since the release of this review?

Hon. J. Redmond: I personally haven't. I have been talking with my department. I've asked when they hear about specifically paid sick leave, what re the conversations. Like you folks would have had through consultation, I'm sure it's a bit of a mixed feeling. But most employers want to look after their employees. There's no question about that.

Again, setting a base minimum, we do have to have a minimum standard that is good for Islanders and good for all Islanders. Right now, as I just mentioned a little bit ago, 65 percent do provide some form of paid sick leave for their employees. We just want to

make sure that there's a minimum standard for the others that do not currently have that.

Hon. H. Perry: So, you are saying that you have had no conversations with any of the stakeholders since this review has been made public.

Hon. J. Redmond: I have not gone out for – sorry, I shouldn't say that. The Construction Association, I have met with, and the Chamber of Commerce, I have met with, for a wholesome various reason, not just focused on this. We certainly had some conversation around what this would look like or could look like. But outside of that at this time, I have not.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque wanted to ask a question as well and bring up a point.

M. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

[4:20 p.m.]

I'm just going to throw this suggestion out there. Obviously, we've got, this session, two bills to the floor with the *Employment Standards Act*. We've got a government with a bunch of amendments that want to try and make a bill work.

I thought I should ask: Is there any appetite, hon. member, to send it to committee to try and work through this and get proper legislation passed?

Hon. H. Perry: I would need to have time to consider that. We didn't have any previous conversation coming into today on this bill, with you or anyone from government, about this. We did an extensive consultation from tip to tip with all stakeholders, whether it was those representing workers, the employees themselves, and the business sector.

We feel that we put forward an amendment to the *Employment Standards Act* that finds that balance; that gives Islanders – that they don't have to make that choice. I've said it many times. They don't have to make that choice between their health and their financial obligations. So, we think this is very, very fair, what we're putting forward.

This motion for amendment that the Minister of Workforce had put forward completely guts our bill; completely guts it.

So, your ask to bring it to a standing committee is – it's kind of too late now. I would have preferred to have this conversation prior to coming in here today because when you look at what the amendments are, it totally, totally changes the intent of our bill, 100 percent. I do not think that's right.

We took this approach – and I said it from the beginning – after the spring session, after the election, we went out. We were talking to people. This is something that we heard from employees who really wanted that security. And the business sector, we've met with them and they were on board for the most part with this. They understood that employees have needs and they have responsibilities, and that they have an obligation.

In this particular amendment that the minister put forward, it even takes out the clause that government may help support businesses with financial, whether wage subsidies or some kind of programming; it takes that out. So, not only does this not help Islanders who are workers, it does not help Island businesses. It doesn't support anybody whatsoever.

M. MacKay: I'm trying to find a common ground here, hon. member. So, is there any way that we could pause this section to get some clarification on exactly the confusion on this – I'm just throwing that out there – instead of us taking a vote on something that looks like it's split down the middle? If we could kind of postpone this section until tomorrow, until we get clarification from the department on what they're trying to accomplish.

Hon. H. Perry: Can he just expand on what he means by this section?

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

M. MacKay: The amendment, sorry.

Hon. H. Perry: Okay. Well, then, the amendment completely guts our legislation. It's totally different legislation from what

we put forward. So, it takes more than just a conversation or for you to go back and get some clarity on it.

The minister responsible for workforce has put this motion forward. They must have put a lot of thought into why they put this forward. I believe she should be answering these questions that we had asked. We need to have that clarity and assurance that this is going to protect Island workers, and also at the same time, support our Island businesses. I do not see that in this amendment anywhere.

Chair: Promoter, do you feel because, in your opinion, the amendment changes the core meaning and purpose and intent of the bill, that the amendment's out of order? Is that what you're suggesting?

Hon. H. Perry: I'm saying this amendment just totally guts the legislation that we put forward, that we've spent so much time going from tip to tip, talking to Island businesses and those who represent – you can make fun of “tip to tip” but the Island does have a tip and a tip. Maybe you don't live in one of those tips, but I represent an area that is one of the extremities from Charlottetown, alright? We also have a voice, just like Souris has a voice.

Chair: So, member, if this does indeed change the core intent of the bill and it changes it enough in your opinion that it's no longer really the bill that you brought forward, I would like to find out if amendments are allowed actually, to bills, that do that. I want to consult with the Clerk, so I'd like to call a brief recess.

Hon. H. Perry: Sure.

[The Committee recessed from 4:24 p.m. to 4:28 p.m.]

Chair: The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*.

We were considering an amendment and we had a discussion. In fact, when it comes to amending bills, it's up for the Committee of the Whole to decide. I think maybe I was getting confused thinking about motions, when you negate a motion, but this is a bill;

it's different. There can be an amendment to an amendment, and then that can be amended. So, it's up to the House to really keep going until they get it to a point where they want it.

Promoter, yes?

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you, Chair.

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

Chair: Alright.

Shall it carry? Carried.

[4:30 p.m.]

[Hon. D. Compton in the chair]

B. Trivers: Madam Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*, 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.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the 22nd order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 22, *Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act*, Bill No. 105, ordered for second reading.

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

G. McNeilly: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 105, *Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act*, read a second time.

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

G. McNeilly: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, 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 Rustico-Emerald to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

[B. Trivers in the chair]

Chair: The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act*.

Promoter, would you like to bring a stranger on the floor?

G. McNeilly: Yes, I would.

Chair: Shall that be granted? Granted.

Thank you. Please state your name for the record.

Elina Lialiuk: Elina Lialiuk.

Chair: Thank you.

Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

An Hon. Member: General questions.

Chair: General questions. Alright, very good. Questions?

Promoter, would you like to give an overview?

G. McNeilly: Yeah. I'd just like to thank the committee for this time. This is an important bill for a lot of people in Prince Edward Island and a lot of people that have come to Prince Edward Island. We remember our past and our history. Sometimes, that history is painful, but needs to be remembered for a very long time. This is the situation with this

bill, the *Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act*.

[4:35 p.m.]

It's looking back into 1932 and '33 in Ukraine where there was a genocide and there was a famine that was denounced on people. It affected millions of people. This is an educational opportunity for people to look at that, and for this Legislature to look at that and realize that there's a lot of mistakes that we make in this world. People in here in Prince Edward Island are looking at us right now to do better and welcome you here and welcome people here today.

The Memorial Day Act too was recognized in 2008 nationally. This act is also looked at in various provinces: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia, and hopefully as we debate this, we will be the next province to talk about this and give this great significance.

What I'll do with the Chair's indulgence is pass it over to my guest, who is going to do a great job of talking about this. I'll pass the floor to you.

Elina Lialiuk: Thank you very much. The Prince Edward Island Branch of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress would like to thank very much MLA Gordon McNeilly for introducing the bill that recognizes the Holodomor in Ukraine as a genocide against the Ukrainian people. We also thank all of you for this opportunity to speak today.

[Ukrainian was spoken]

Holodomor is a Ukrainian word that means death inflicted by starvation. In 1932 and 1933, millions of Ukrainians starved to death as a result of deliberate policies devised by Joseph Stalin, leader of the USSR. With highly productive soils producing wheat and other foods, Ukraine was a critical Soviet asset. But Stalin saw the independent-minded Ukrainian peasantry who resisted collectivization and a population that embraced the Ukrainian language, culture, and national identity as a threat.

In 1930, he destroyed Ukraine's independent Orthodox church and its clergy and

repressed Ukrainian intellectuals, artists, writers, and educators. Next, he went after Ukrainian farmers who made up 80 percent of Ukraine's population. Privately owned farms were forced into state-controlled collectives with no compensation for seized land, equipment, and animals.

Ukrainians revolted and suffered brutal punishment. Better-off farmers and their families and anyone opposed to collectivization were executed by firing squads or deported to concentration camps; about half a million people.

High grain quotas were imposed, the sale of which was used to finance the industrialization of the USSR. Secret police and soldiers went village to village to take every last bit of grain by force, and also stealing other foods families could have used to survive. New laws allowed for anyone, including children, to be shot or imprisoned for taking the tiniest scrap of food from collective fields. The borders of Ukraine were sealed so that people couldn't flee to seek food elsewhere. Internal passports were issued to prevent travel without permission. Violators were imprisoned or returned home to starve to death.

One third of Ukraine's villages were penalized for not meeting grain quotas. They were denied supplies and effectively sentenced to death. Political leaders were imprisoned or killed, with some committing suicide.

In 1933, at the height of the Holodomor, 28,000 people starved to death every day.

[4:40 p.m.]

Moscow denied the famine for 50 years. When the USSR fell in 1991 and researchers were able to access Soviet archives, the full horror of the genocide was finally realized. Only by exposing genocide and examining its root causes, we can hope to prevent future genocides.

Today, Russia continues to persecute, kill, maim, and seek to destroy Ukraine, its culture, and its people. Taking a page from Stalin, Putin has weaponized food, endangering the global food supply by mining Ukraine's rich agricultural fields,

destroying grain storage facilities and port infrastructure, and limiting grain exports to some of the world's most vulnerable countries.

We ask you to join with Canada and seven other provinces to recognize the Holodomor in Ukraine as a genocide, and to acknowledge a memorial day on the fourth Saturday in November each year.

Thank you. *Дякую.*

[Applause]

Chair: Thank you. Well said.

I have the hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General on my list first.

Hon. B. Thompson: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, member, for bringing this bill forward.

I notice our gallery is full; if your stranger would recognize some of the folks who are in the gallery here today.

Elina Lialiuk: Yes.

We do have Sharon Labchuk here with us today. She is in charge of our Holodomor Committee within the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Prince Edward Island Branch.

Viktoria Baida: She is the secretary of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Prince Edward Island Branch.

Vasyl Salabai: This is my father, and also a volunteer for the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Prince Edward Island Branch.

Alla Bednarchuk: She is the teacher at the Ukrainian Saturday School of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Prince Edward Island Branch.

Elina Salabai: This is my mother, and a volunteer for the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Prince Edward Island Branch.

Nicole Lialiuk: She is my daughter.

Anna Liashchuk: She is one more teacher at the Ukrainian Saturday School, Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Prince Edward Island Branch.

Serhii Labik: He is a volunteer of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Prince Edward Island Branch.

Serhii's son, Artur Labik: He is a violinist/musician in our community and volunteers for the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Prince Edward Island branch.

Oksana Labik: She is the mother of this talented boy, and also a volunteer at our Ukrainian Saturday School of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Prince Edward Island Branch.

Mark Lialiuk: My son, and also a volunteer for our PEI Ukrainian community.

Olena Bondarenko: Also one more devoted volunteer for our PEI community and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Prince Edward Island Branch.

[Applause]

Hon. B. Thompson: Thank you, and I'll be supporting this bill.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you very much, Chair.

I want to start by thanking the promoter, of course, for bringing this bill forward, and all the help that he received with the defender on the floor. Thank you for coming in today and defending this bill and sharing a little bit about what Holodomor means and a little bit about the history on it, because many Islanders – and I'm going to include myself in this – until the member brought it forward, I didn't even know about it.

So, that's great that we now – or hopefully, will have – a day to recognize this and to remember this, because it's very important to those Ukrainians who either have lived through it or have family connections to it, and also to recognize what's presently going on there too; bringing that to the light.

[4:45 p.m.]

If this bill goes through, and it's the fourth Saturday in November – so, this coming Saturday will be the fourth Saturday in November – how will you and your family

be marking this, and how do you suggest Islanders may use this day to educate themselves on it a little bit more. How would you like to see Islanders mark this?

Elina Lialiuk: I would appreciate if, at schools, Holodomor could become part of the school program so that teachers together with kids, and also to universities – lecturers together with their students – could raise awareness about this topic because it is very important. We are talking about genocide, and it was prohibited to talk about this genocide until the 1980s. That is why so many people never heard about that.

Taking into account that sometimes historical lessons are ignored, such terrible things tend to repeat. That is what we are observing right now in Ukraine. In Ukraine, we are observing another act of genocide, the genocidal war.

Also, I would organize commemoration events across the Island. Usually, in Ukraine, we wear forget-me-not flowers. This is something similar to the poppy flowers worn here during Remembrance Day. At 7:32 p.m., which is 19:32 according to the 24-hour format of time, all people light a candle just to take a moment and to pay tribute to all the victims of these terrible times.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you very much for that. You articulated that so well. I'm anticipating and hoping that this bill will pass and that all Islanders will take your words and put them into action.

Thank you again.

Elina Lialiuk: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair, and thank you for being here with us today, and thank you to the mover of this bill.

I think that one of the beautiful things about PEI is that as we grow and we get to be more diverse, then we get to learn more about history that we may not have – not that we don't have access to it, but it's not readily available, given it was something that wasn't allowed to be talked about until the 1980s.

One of the things that I heard from a movie one time is how you want history to remember you. I think that this is a really great example of being a community that wants to learn from people who are coming in.

One other thing, too, is history repeats itself and we're seeing that in real time. So, days like this are really important because there's one day every year, at least, where that's where our brains go, and we remember that. I think that these days are really important.

With that, of course, I support the bill. That's all I wanted to say.

Elina Lialiuk: Thank you.

Also, Holodomor was not only the genocide against Ukrainian people. Holodomor was recognized as a genocide against humanity. If we want to prevent another genocide happening in the future again, we should know about this genocide. We should be able to recognize genocide in its early stages, to help to avoid it.

Chair: Thank you.

I just wanted to say thank you to the member for bringing this forward and thank you so much for making this happen.

I want to recognize Sharon Labchuk here behind me as well, former leader of the Green Party. She actually had approached me and wanted to know if I would be interested in bringing this forward. I'm kind of regretting I didn't now, but I'm glad that you did because it is such an important story.

I wanted to mention that my family out in Alberta has a Ukrainian connection. I have a cousin, Natasha Grant, who's part of the Shumka dance troop, and she's actually dancing the lead in one of their productions coming up. I got to experience the Ukrainian culture full on this summer, when I was in Alberta, in Vegreville, at one of the big festivals. So, I understand first-hand what a great culture it is and how important it is to make sure that any event that would have caused genocide is recognized.

Thank you for that.

Any further comments?

An Hon. Member: Call the question.

Chair: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Chair: Carried unanimously.

[Applause]

G. McNeilly: I move the title.

[4:50 p.m.]

Chair: *Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

G. McNeilly: I move the enacting clause.

Chair: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island as follows.

Shall it carry? Carried.

G. McNeilly: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

[Hon. D. Compton in the chair]

B. Trivers: Madam Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having had under consideration a bill to be intitled *Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West
Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Madam Speaker, at this time I would like to, with the House's indulgence, ask for unanimous consent to move this bill to third reading.

Speaker: Does the member have unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the 22nd order of the day and the bill, *Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act*, be now read a third time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 105, *Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act*, read a third time.

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

G. McNeilly: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the said bill do now pass.

Speaker: This is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do pass.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary-minded, “nay.”

Hon. members, the bill has passed, and it is unanimous.

[Applause]

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

G. McNeilly: The official opposition rests its time.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

M. MacKay: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, that this House adjourn until Wednesday, November 22nd, at 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Have a good evening, everyone.

[The Legislature adjourned until Wednesday, November 22nd, at 1:00 p.m.]