

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Darlene Compton

Hansard, Published by Order of the Legislature

First Session of the Sixty-seventh General Assembly

Wednesday, 8 November 2023

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The Legislature sat at 1:02 p.m.

[Hon. D. Compton in the chair]

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

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

Welcome to the folks in the gallery who are joining us here today. It's great to be back today.

Today is National Indigenous Veterans Day, where Canadians come together to honour the important contributions of Indigenous peoples made by the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis veterans in service to Canada. Indigenous peoples have made significant contributions to Canada's military efforts. Many Indigenous communities honour these veterans at the start of ceremonies, with powwows, and other events.

Prince Edward Island is currently showcasing some of the best hockey talent in the world right now. We're hosting the 2023 World U17 Hockey Challenge in PEI. There are five countries represented at this tournament ranging from Canada, US, Sweden, Czechia, and Finland. We are pleased to host this event and to be on the national stage. A warm welcome to all the athletes and the visitors who have currently come to our Island.

Colonel Gray Colonels won the team's third Senior AAA Boys Soccer League championship; third in a row. In addition, the Colonel Gray Colonels have won the first Senior AAA Girls Field Hockey League championship in 50 years. The Bluefield Bobcats recently won their first Senior AAA Girls Soccer title since 2011.

The Purple Ribbon Pinning Bee is happening again this year. The Status of Women will be hosting their annual event to pin purple ribbons to bookmarks for the use in schools, businesses, and organizations across the Island. The event will be held at the Charlottetown Learning Library tomorrow between 6:30 and 8 p.m. The 2023-24 campaign theme to end gender

violence is "Healing gender-based violence begins here."

[1:05 p.m.]

I do want to recognize a group of young agricultural people. The 4-H sends two groups to the Royal every year to participate in the TD Classic. It's at the Royal Winter Fair. Prince Edward Island was well represented this year, with an all-female team with their dairy cattle. I want to recognize them as the Minister of Agriculture, a farmer, and a father: Ava Bysterveldt, Layne Whelan, Alyson Thompson, Zoe Stewart, Anneka Versteeg, Anneka Kouwenberg, Reagan Bouma, and Emily MacBeath.

Their team placed first overall out of 50 groups from across Canada. Anneka Kouwenberg from Vernon Bridge placed first, and Honorable Mention Grand Champion. My daughter Alyson also had a first-place heifer. We're quite proud of these girls; they've done a tremendous job.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. B. Thompson: They're flying home today. They're a tired bunch, but they did very well in representing PEI and I'd like to congratulate them.

Thank you.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to welcome Dante to the gallery, and Paul Acorn as well. Welcome to the proceedings.

I just want to say hello to everybody in District 14 too, especially those watching in Charlotte Court. I know there are at least two or three watching there, maybe. Saying hello to them.

I also want to just echo the sentiments of the Deputy Premier with Indigenous Veterans Day, November 8th, today. That's special, considering the history and what they've done to serve our country too. It's a very important day, as is this whole entire week.

I want to say a big shout-out to Blanche Bennett, who is at PE Home. She is a veteran, and on Sunday, she will be an incredible 102 years old. Thank you for your service, Blanche; a very special, special person at PE Home. That's a very, very special milestone. She's seen a lot throughout.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

G. McNeilly: Madam Speaker, everybody has a \$10 bill, and you realize you can identify what colour that is when I say a \$10 bill, but can you think about who is on that \$10 bill? Today, November 8th, Viola Desmond – it's a major anniversary: 77 years ago, she was dragged out of a movie theatre just because she sat in the wrong section of that movie theatre.

This happened two hours from here, where we stand, in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia. There were no fines for segregation back then, so they trumped her up on charges of tax evasion. That stood until 2010 when she was pardoned, only 15 years ago. Just give some thought to how far we've come and what that major milestone means. She's an incredible figure in Canadian history.

I also want to say a big shout-out to Colonel Gray field hockey, which the Deputy Premier mentioned; the soccer team; as well as Queen Charlotte men and women's volleyball teams. They won both the championships, so congratulations there.

I hope everybody has a great day today. Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and good afternoon to my colleagues and to everyone joining us in the gallery today. A shout-out to everyone tuning in from Charlottetown-Victoria Park and all around the Island.

Happening tonight, as was mentioned, is the Purple Ribbon Pinning Bee from 6:30 to eight at the community kitchen at the Charlottetown Library Learning Centre. The Advisory Council on the Status of Women and Carolyn MacFadyen, the vice president of the PEI Federated Women's Institutes,

are inviting people to join the pinning bee to prepare ribbons for the Purple Ribbon Campaign against violence against women. The volunteers cut thousands of ribbons and pin them to information cards and distribute them, as was mentioned, to schools, individuals, and organizations across the Island. Purple ribbons are worn in honour and remembrance of the 14 women who were murdered in Montreal in 1989, and the 10 women who were murdered in Prince Edward Island since 1989 by a man who knew them. We also wear purple ribbons as a call for justice for the thousands of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls in Canada.

[1:10 p.m.]

This event is always well attended and there's always lots of good conversation, and you can have a drink of tea or whatever while you're doing that. It's a lot of fun.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Lisa Cooper who was reelected as the chief of the Native Council of PEI. Lisa was elected chief for another four-year term last Saturday at the Native Council's general assembly in Mill River. So, I'd just like to say congratulations to Lisa Cooper.

Also, this is an event that happened a little while ago, but we weren't in here, and with the amount of food raised, it needs to be mentioned. The Chief's Haunted Barn in Scotchfort ran for two weeks leading up to Halloween. Admission was free with a donation to the food bank.

I wasn't really aware of this haunted barn until my daughter came home from school one day and said, "Mom, what are you doing this next Monday? Can you take me and my friends to this haunted barn?" I said, "Sure, I'll sit, and I'll wait in the van. We'll load up the minivan and we'll head over, and I'll sit in the van while you go."

When we got there, they convinced me to go in. I don't like being scared like they do. I went in and it was incredible. I can't imagine the amount of time, and it's just Chief Junior Gould and his wife who do it, the two of them. Then the people who work there come in – I think it was the night before, they went in and saw it for the first time. Had a tour themselves, and then went

in. They had fireworks there on Saturday night. It was so well done. I have goosebumps just thinking about it. I just want to thank Junior Gould and his team for that initiative. They had 12 truckloads of food; 11,000 pounds of food was collected and delivered to the food bank. That is incredible.

With that, I wish everyone a good day.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

R. Croucher: Good afternoon, Madam Speaker, and good afternoon to anyone tuning in from District 1.

It is my pleasure to rise today and recognize one of District 1's very finest.

Cst. Miranda McKinnon recently graduated the RCMP Academy in Regina, Saskatchewan. She was part of Troop 1 that graduated the academy on October 2nd, and she served as troop leader. Cst. McKinnon's first posting is out of Fort McPherson, Northwest Territories. She is the daughter of very proud parents, Sherri McKinnon and Jansen McKinnon of Souris.

Please join me in congratulating Cst. McKinnon. You make the Province of Prince Edward Island very proud, as well as District 1, and we wish you a long, successful, safe, and fulfilling career with the RCMP.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

It gives me great pleasure to rise. Today, I wanted to say hello and greetings to beautiful District 5 Mermaid-Stratford. I hope everyone's having a great day. Also, to my faithful watchers, my mom and dad who tune in every day, I hope they're having a great day, and a great day to all of you today.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Donagh.

S. MacEwen: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Today I was able to speak and participate in the Indigenous People's Remembrance Day in Abegweit First Nation. What a moving event it was. Chief Gould and council are amazing to bring in the surrounding communities and also the schools. Both grades 7 and 8 from Morell Consolidated and Mount Stewart Consolidated were there as well.

I thanked the veterans both past and present in the community. Certainly, a checkered past with government for our First Nations, but they were there to serve for us. Chief Gould spoke about the first time an Indigenous person was allowed to lay a wreath at the Cenotaph in Ottawa, it would be in 1995. He asked those in the room who were 28 years of age to stand up so that the kids could see that in these young people's lifetime, that's when the first wreath was able to be laid.

Paul Ledwell, the deputy minister for Veterans Affairs Canada, and he spoke about a recent trip overseas where the story was told to him about a young First Nations man who joined to serve versus go to a residential school. It's those kinds of story and those uncomfortable truths that are continuously told, and once they're shared with the surrounding communities that come in, it's quite moving and quite impactful.

I just want to thank the community for hosting us all there today.

Thanks, Madam Speaker.

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

[1:15 p.m.]

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

I'd like to welcome everybody back today and also those who are joining us in the gallery. I'd also like to welcome the new Pages who are with us today. We have a couple of new Pages, including Emmeline Stanley, who lives just down the road from

me. Here she arrives just now, right on cue. Nice to see you, Emmeline, and thank you for being here today as one of the new Pages.

I'd also like to welcome Samantha Lilley, who is sitting at the table today, part of the staff here at the Legislature. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I suspect this is the first time you've sat at the table. So, welcome to you, Samantha. Lovely to see you here today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

P. Bevan-Baker: I'd also like – and I know there's a statement from the minister coming later on the 2023 Senior Islanders of the Year, but one of those Islanders happens to live in my district, Mari Basiletti. I would just like personally to pass on my congratulations to Mari to have been chosen as one of this year's Senior Islanders of the Year.

Mari is an incredible – they all are, all of the seniors who get this award are incredible parts of our community. She has contributed at a local level in Canoe Cove and also provincially as chair of the Status of Women committee for a number of years a little while ago.

Her dedication and her love for her community shines through. Everybody who knows Mari is absolutely captivated by her kindness and her humour and just her willingness to help. There's nothing happens in Canoe Cove without Mari at the centre of it. I wish her well. It's a very well-earned recognition.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

T. DesRoches: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise today to bring greetings to District 21, the greatest district on the Island. The only thing we overlook is the water.

I just wanted to bring greetings to a resident from District 21, the past mayor, Basil Stewart. Basil watches at home faithfully or from work on his computer. He seems to send messages whenever you're sitting in the Legislature. Every evening I get a little

message from him about something going on through the day. I just wanted to bring some greetings to Basil, if you're out there watching.

Also, in one our minister's statements, we're going to hear about the accolades of a Summerside girl, Hannah Taylor, with the Pan Am Games. I won't ruin that, but many accolades. I just want to congratulate her.

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

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

I'd like to start by recognizing the people in District 24 Evangeline-Miscouche. Hi to everyone who's watching from home. Welcome also to the ones in the gallery. A special welcome to the ones watching at home from Le Chez-Nous, which is a seniors' community centre up in my district. I know they're watching faithfully.

I'd also like to recognize a group of young individuals, 42 of them, who will be gathering this weekend in Mill River. They're enrolled in a leadership economic development program. They have gone through one weekend, but there's a four-weekend training component to this leadership for these 42 young adults. I want to wish them well and I want to say that I'll be seeing them on Friday night at Mill River Resort. All the best to them.

We need to keep applauding those efforts to make sure that the people who we have will become citizens of tomorrow, but they are here and they are willing to learn and go through the economic process and also a leadership component to the program. Kudos goes out to the RDEE institution as well that spearheads this project.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

It's great to be back here today. Welcome back to all my colleagues. Welcome to those joining us here in the gallery. Hello to all

those tuning in from District 9. I would argue District 9 is the best district in all of PEI.

I do want to just take this opportunity to thank the staff in Education and Early Years, along with the Interministerial Women's Secretariat. I've been out to many schools and child care centres over the last couple of months and we really have seen remarkable growth and development within our schools and our child care centres. There are so many exciting things happening within the department, and I am looking forward to discussing some of those initiatives here in the weeks to come.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Honourable Marion Reid

B. Trivers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise today to honour the extraordinary life of the Honourable Marion Reid.

Growing up on a farm taught her coping skills, learning time management, the art of compromise and respect, manners, and self-confidence.

Her parents recognized her independent nature early on and encouraged Marion to ask questions. She was raised to believe that with hard work, she could do anything she set her mind to.

[1:20 p.m.]

Marion Reid was remarkable and embraced all aspects of life, ranging from nurturing her children, family support, hard work, maintaining a positive attitude, responsibility for community, reverence for nature and for the land, and the significance of love, laughter, and celebration. She was passionate for life, learning, and for a better world and making a difference.

Despite unexpected hurdles and challenges, she believed that you needed to summon whatever resources you can find to gather the courage to get back up and go forward.

Known for her positivity and belief that there was nothing that could not be worked out or another way to be found, Marion would say things like: "Things work out for the best for those who make the best of how things worked out."

During her 21 years of teaching, she made time to read aloud to her students every day, sharing stories of bravery, endurance, beauty, goodness, and determination. She believed that the power of words can strongly influence the mind. Marion would say: "Education covers a lot of ground, but it doesn't cultivate any of it."

Marion earned many awards and designations, served on many boards and committees, and belonged to many organizations. In fact, Madam Speaker, these are so numerous that I will table a compilation to this House as I don't have time to read them all during this member's statement. I'm sure you'll appreciate that.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

B. Trivers: Marion was so impressed with Angus MacLean's integrity and vision that she became a member of his campaign committee in 1976. She made the address at his testimonial dinner marking his 25th anniversary as a Member of Parliament for PEI. She was first elected in the general election in April 1979 as a member for 1st Queens district, for 10 years.

She met with people from all walks of life and had all the time in the world for them. She had great empathy for all people, especially for those she knew were struggling with life's hardships.

Another one of her great quotes was: "Don't feel entitled for anything that you did not sweat and work for. Without some adversity, you will never know what you are capable of being. Adversity will either grind you down or polish you up."

She and Leone Bagnall became the first women elected for the Conservative Party of PEI in 1979.

I have a lot more written here to say, but I'm going to skip right to the end and just say that we have lost an extraordinary Islander, but her legacy lives on.

I'll share one last piece of wisdom from Marion that she lived her life by: "Where there is righteousness in the heart, there is beauty in character. Where there is beauty in the character, there is harmony in the home. When there is harmony in the home, there is order in the nation. When there is order in the nation, there is peace in the world."

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Brooke MacArthur – Judo

H. MacLennan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am pleased to rise today to recognize Brooke MacArthur. Brooke is a 15-year-old and a straight-A honours student in Grade 10 at Westisle Composite High School. She is an elite Island athlete from Birch Hill who is deeply involved in the sport and self-defense learning of judo.

Brooke is currently ranked second in all of Canada for her competitive division of -44kg in the U18 division with Judo Canada. She competed at the 2023 Open National Judo Championships in Montreal and took home two medals. She won a bronze medal in the under-16 and bronze medal in the under-18 category.

She has placed on the podium at every Level "A" national and international tournament across Canada, as well as every regional tournament attended by her. In fact, in many of the tournaments, she brought home more than one medal for competing in multiple divisions. She has brought home a total of six national medals and five regional medals this past year.

Brooke is ranked a brown belt who is working to achieve points for her black belt, which she can obtain within the year.

Tomorrow, Brooke will leave to travel to Montreal. While in Montreal, Brooke will compete in the Quebec Open National Championships in two age and weight divisions open to North American competitors. She will then go on to train at

the National Training Centre for the week. Following her training, she will compete at the Pan American Centennial Cup in two age and weight divisions, including the senior division, which is open to worldwide competitors.

Brooke considers herself a small fish in a very large pond and loves to show other young girls that they, too, can compete at the national and international levels, demonstrating that Island athletes can achieve whatever they put their hearts and minds to.

Congratulations, Brooke, in all of your outstanding achievements. Good luck with where your journey in the sport takes you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[1:25 p.m.]

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Remembering Leo Cheverie

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm going to just send the Speaker a message. This might go a little bit over; I promise the rest of them will be short.

It does not feel that long ago that I stood in this House to acknowledge an outstanding Islander, a legend, Leo Cheverie.

As most of you already know, the horrible disease of cancer took Leo's life on September 7th. When I went to visit him in the hospital in his last days, I had just missed a party the night before where they had 25 people in the hospital room and music playing.

After he passed, there was a packed church for a beautiful funeral service, there was a packed hall for a celebration afterwards, and I think an even more packed fire hall in Charlottetown for a celebration of life held on the night before his birthday on October 20th.

There was such an impressive lineup of Island musicians and local celebrities involved, and this truly speaks to the beautiful, warm, inclusive, loving, justice

warrior soul Leo Cheverie was. If one thing is clear to me, no one is ready to say goodbye to Leo, but we certainly gave him one heck of a send-off. Leo would have loved that party at the fire hall, and many people told me they swore they saw him walking through the crowd. It really was a sick party.

In Leo's funeral mass itinerary, his family wrote a thank you message to Leo's friends, and I'm going to quote that:

"Your visits buoyed not only his spirit but ours as well, and while we knew he was a special person, we had no idea of the width and the breadth of his impact on so many others. There are really only two degrees of separation when one knew Leo. It is difficult to try and sum up a life so fully lived, so I'm not going to try, but only ask that all of you who knew and loved Leo, please go forward and try to help carry on his legacy by being kind, listening to other perspectives, and by always making room at your table for others."

Leo continues to be a beacon in these troubled times. He is a gift that keeps on giving. Friends he had who were not necessarily connected before are connecting now because of their love for him. For someone who was so bright in life, his light continues to shine and inspires us every day to dig down and be a bit better person than we were the day before.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

We found out 30 minutes ago that the Premier will not be here today for Question Period, and I have to wonder what prompted this sudden absence. It's the second day of the fall sitting, and the Premier is MIA.

There are many questions on the outreach centre that need to be asked and answered.

Of course, the Minister of Social Development has some very –

Speaker: Hon. member, it is the rule of the House not to make aware that a member is not here, so I'd like you to rephrase your question.

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

Of course, the Minister of Social Development has some very important responsibilities in this area also. The minister also represents Summerside, and the representatives of that city have said they don't want this model of outreach centre in their city.

As the minister knows, the Premier said last week he would not want an outreach centre near his own home. To quote the Premier, "I would surely feel the same way if this was beside my home."

Support and plan for outreach centre model

Since the Premier's not here, I'll ask – sorry, Madam Speaker. I will ask the Minister of Social Development: Do you agree with the Premier? Would you reject such a centre in your community?

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

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

During the debate yesterday, I think we acknowledged that it is not an ideal model. We're working on providing more supportive housing and more emergency shelter in Summerside. It's taking a bit more time than we would like, but that's because we are working hard on the ground to examine the situation, connect with all of our community partners, analyze exactly what the need is, and put together a model that's more ideal instead of repeating what we did in Charlottetown.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I cannot believe that the Minister of Social Development did not stand up and speak because the issues around the Outreach Centre are so, so entangled in your department. You have to do something.

[Interjections]

Speaker: The member has the floor.

Hon. H. Perry: So, since the Premier is not – sorry, I will ask the Minister of Social Development another question. Do you agree with the Premier –

[Interjections]

Hon. H. Perry: I'm going to ask you a question: Would you reject such a centre in your community? I'm asking the Minister of Social Development, who is also the minister responsible for the city of Summerside.

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

[1:30 p.m.]

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

I guess as the Minister of Housing just said, we're trying to come up with a different strategy for Summerside. Summerside needs a shelter, absolutely. Summerside does have a men's shelter. Summerside does have LifeHouse, a women and children's centre.

We do need more beds in Summerside. We are working towards that. I work with the Minister of Housing all the time, and the mayor of Summerside. Yes, we need a place in Summerside for shelter, but it doesn't need to be the same situation that we have here in Charlottetown.

Thank you for that question.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Question to the acting premier and minister responsible for public safety: Last week, the Premier said he would not want such a centre in his neighbourhood. According to the secret communication plan provided to the City of Charlottetown, you were supposed to be at the announcement of the outreach location last Friday. We'll explore that later.

But for now, do you agree with the Premier? Would you support such a centre in your own community?

Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Hon. B. Thompson: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the hon. Leader of the Opposition for that question.

This is a very challenging time for our province. We're dealing with homelessness, mental health, and addictions right across this Island, and we're not alone in that. This is happening across the Island. We're trying to address this. This is a population that we can't ignore. It's a population that we have to be there. They don't always want the help, but we have to be there to help when we can.

We're working with the City of Charlottetown. I met with the chief of police last week. We had an hour and a half meeting, and we're helping to address the public safety issues in Charlottetown because we want a safe community everywhere across this Island. We're working with the City of Charlottetown on that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

As we all know, there were significant rumours in Eastern PEI about the potential presence of outreach clients in Souris. There were also concerns in Montague, and we heard them.

Would the Minister of Fisheries support a centre on the outreach model in Montague?

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

Hon. R. Lantz: I'm quite sure that the member from Montague would support looking after vulnerable people in his district. I'll repeat the same answer that I used previously. We've done needs assessments in Kings County, we're working with community partners to understand exactly what the need is, we'll continue to add supportive housing and emergency shelter on a need-by-need basis, case-by-case basis, and as I said, I think the member would support that.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I have no idea why the Minister of Housing would stand up and say: "I think this is what he would say. I think this is what he would support."

Same question, back again, to the Minister of Fisheries: Would you support a centre, the current outreach model, in Montague? Second time.

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

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

The Liberals seem to say they support the most vulnerable Islanders, but not when it's politically convenient for them.

[Interjections]

Hon. C. Deagle: Yeah, that's quite the (Indistinct) –

[Interjections]

Speaker: Order! Order!

Hon. C. Deagle: While they want to play politics with the issue, we'll support those who need it, and I'm proud to stand behind that.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Obviously, they're coming unhinged over there. We support the most vulnerable sector. We also represent all Islanders. We respect their asks and their needs, and that's our responsibility. Do something for the vulnerable Islanders instead of blaming other people. Say nothing, do nothing, blame others. That's stuff that is done on that side of the room, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Is there a question?

Hon. H. Perry: My question now is to the Minister of Education. You've supported the outreach centre model in downtown Charlottetown. How about in your community? Would you support such a centre?

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

Hon. N. Jameson: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, hon. member, for the question.

[1:35 p.m.]

I think it's fairly clear with regards to these questions and the answers that are being provided on this side of the House, we want to support our most vulnerable Islanders, and that's precisely why we're committed to doing that and working our way in a more positive direction.

I know that this file is in good hands with the Minister of Housing. I've had many discussions with him. I know his willingness to work with the City, as well as mine.

Again, we're here and I look forward to continuing to work on this file with the Minister of Housing and all my colleagues here in this House.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The current Minister of Transportation was quite involved in the outreach model at the beginning of his mishandled and mismanagement venture.

Does the Minister of Transportation support this model or, like the Premier, would he reject such a concept?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

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

As my other colleagues have said here, we have been there for the most vulnerable, will continue to be right across the Island, and certainly in western PEI; I think you look at the progress that we've made with regard to housing, for example, in the western part of the province compared to the previous 12 years of complete inactivity.

We have been and will continue to be there for Islanders right across the board. I will be there for Islanders and for the most vulnerable in the western part of the province.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

We're not getting any responses. The same yesterday; all these questions, no responses to the questions.

Another question that was not answered yesterday was on the topic of a backup plan. This do-nothing government seems to have done exactly nothing to prepare.

The Premier even said in his press conference last Friday that if the relocating of the centre is rejected, he doesn't know what he's going to do. This is simply not acceptable. Part of governing is planning for any and all possible scenarios.

Question to the Minister of Housing: Given that your government has done absolutely nothing, no consultation on your current plan to move the centre to Park Street, what

is your backup plan should the City of Charlottetown reject your request?

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

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

I feel like the Leader of the Opposition is daring the City of Charlottetown to vote this down. He's on record; he's asking all of our members here if they'd support an outreach centre in their community. We've already said –

[Interjections]

Hon. R. Lantz: I explained this yesterday...

Speaker: The minister has the floor.

Hon. R. Lantz: ...the outreach model is not working well. We're embarking on a process to see how that will work going forward.

You're on record. You stood in front of a camera and said that outreach centre here in Charlottetown should be shut down.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Hon. R. Lantz: Yeah, well, you'd leave a lot of people without services. As imperfect as they are, you'd leave them without services.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Obviously, he doesn't read very well because I said the current model as it operates today is not working. The government has to hit the reset button and provide the supports that are needed for all Islanders, especially those of our vulnerable sector.

Here is the fact of the matter: Islanders who need these services are left in limbo and several Charlottetown communities are frantically trying to grapple with your lack of empathy and the do-nothing approach.

I will ask this question to the Minister of Housing: When exactly will you have a backup plan in place, and when can we expect you to provide insight on it here in this House? Are you going to, again, just do nothing and just wait and see while tensions continue to build about the failed operations of the current outreach centre?

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

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

I have to say I was astonished to hear the Leader of the Opposition stand in this House yesterday and say that he drives by the centre occasionally and then have the nerve to say that he's got an understanding of what actually happens inside that place. Never gone through the door. Not gone through the door.

[Interjections]

Speaker: Minister has the floor.

Hon. R. Lantz: Well, I invite you – there's an open invitation. Many members of our caucus have taken up that invitation...

[Interjections]

Speaker: The minister has the floor.

Hon. R. Lantz: ...to tour the centre to see what actually happens inside there. There's an open invitation for you to come by and learn a little bit more about it.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: (Indistinct) I did call twice to go, but they couldn't stage it in time for me to go.

Yesterday, (Indistinct) some contradictions on the Premier's statements versus his actions as they pertained to when and how the City of Charlottetown was notified about this plan to relocate the centre to Park Street.

At his press conference, he was asked what the plan was to get the whole council on board for the plan, and the Premier's reply was that the mayor and the deputy mayor

had not been involved in the application and they had been informed only the day before the announcement.

[1:40 p.m.]

But a secret communications document that was written by your government was sent to the City on October 26th, so today, I'll give the minister a chance to give us the straight facts.

Question to the Minister of Housing: Was this document generated by your office?

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

Hon. R. Lantz: The answer is no, it wasn't generated by my office, Housing, Land and Communities.

Let me set the record straight, because he's making some insinuations about things that are actually not correct.

What the Premier tried to explain to you yesterday – and I thought he did a good job but perhaps you weren't listening – through my experience as a city councillor, I understand that councillors cannot be seen to be prejudging a decision that will become before them at council. We've been very careful and respectful because the mayor asked that they not attend the news conference, they not be a part of that in any way, because it may be seen that they are prejudging what our plan is, because it requires their approval.

We worked very collaboratively with them. We met several times last week with the mayor, with the deputy, CAO. It's been an ongoing discussion. We announced this in July that we were awaiting an environmental assessment with the intention of potentially moving the outreach centre there. It's not sudden.

The deputy mayor, the CAO, director of corporate services, the police chief; all were involved. So, make the insinuations that you want. We'll give you the facts when you want them.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

We actually love when this minister gets up because he puts his foot in his mouth so many times.

So, let's talk about respect. We all know that this Premier doesn't seem to have a backup plan, and that he isn't able to share. But perhaps yesterday, his Minister of Housing accidentally shared part of his plan. Yesterday, the Minister of Housing said that if the City of Charlottetown rejects their request, perhaps they could find a way to go around them.

So, minister: What ways have you considered to work around the City?

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

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

I did not say that we were going to go around them; I said that that would be a very bad idea, is what I said. Now, the opposition seems to be intent on spending a lot of time talking about a backup plan today. They've got a motion that's still outstanding and I'm happy to discuss this in great detail.

[Interjections]

Hon. R. Lantz: I've still got the floor, yeah. We'll have a further, fulsome conversation about this when we get back to that motion.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

We have seen several municipalities express some hesitancy at the possibility of having the current model of outreach centre open in their own communities, and it's easy to see why. The model is failing, the operations and services can't be accessed safely, and the communities in the affected areas are on just tenterhooks. Now, we have the Minister of Housing saying that we could simply go around the elected municipal officials if government doesn't like their decisions.

I'll ask you another question that went unanswered yesterday.

Question to the Minister of Housing: How do you expect to build trust with communities, elected councils, or other stakeholders in your efforts to spread the outreach centre model across the province? Are you suggesting that you will just ignore their decisions or input?

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

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

He didn't have another question in the can, I guess, because I just answered that one. I said that that would not be a good thing to do. The way to do this is to operate, to work collaboratively with communities who require services for vulnerable people in this province. That's what we're doing. That's how we're moving forward. To suggest otherwise, which you're attempting to do apparently, is incorrect.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's clear this government is doing nothing to prepare a backup plan. For some of my colleagues, we were informed at a committee meeting on October 25th that apparently government didn't even bother to consult with the experts that they have in government on the model and the operations that are currently on offer at the outreach centre.

Question to the Minister of Housing: Why did no one from your government consult with the Chief Public Health Office about the services offered at the Community Outreach Centre?

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

Hon. R. Lantz: Madam Speaker, I don't believe that's true.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I sat right here. The Chief Public Health Officer was there. I asked the question. I heard the response. We have the video clip on it.

[1:45 p.m.]

So, it's very, very possible the City of Charlottetown is not going to approve the Province's plan for an outreach centre at Park Street. It appears that the government's empathy for vulnerable citizens ends. It ends when they feel they can download the responsibilities on anyone else, say anything, do nothing, and blame others.

So, what does the Minister of Housing say to vulnerable Islanders who need help? What do you say to them, to those who are living in precarious positions who need at least a degree of certainty from this government? When will this government accept responsibility to provide direction?

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

Hon. R. Lantz: I'm not really sure what the question was, there. When we will we provide responsibility for direction? Something?

Hon. H. Perry: This is not a game.

Hon. R. Lantz: I didn't understand it.

Hon. H. Perry: This is not a game.

Hon. R. Lantz: Do you want to repeat it?

Hon. H. Perry: It's not a game.

Speaker: The minister has the floor.

Hon. R. Lantz: I honestly didn't understand the question, Madam Speaker, but I'll just say that we're moving ahead with the plan we've got. We're hoping to work collaboratively with the City so that we can hit the reset button and renew our service model for delivering these services here in Charlottetown and all across the Province for vulnerable Islanders, Madam Speaker.

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

G. McNeilly: Yesterday there was a set of remarks which I find quite strange. The minister, during his remarks, admitted the timing of the announcement was suspicious. To quote the minister, "The timing, I will admit, looks suspicious, but it's just the way it has unfolded."

Communications re: outreach centre

So, why did the minister admit that the timing looks suspicious? What exactly did the minister find so suspicious of the timing of the announcement?

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

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

Yes, I was addressing the accusation that this was sudden; a sudden announcement just prior to the opening of the Legislature. But I actually addressed this issue just a few answers ago, and that is that we informed the public at a public meeting in July that we were submitting an application for a temporary extension of the shelter services at Park Street, and that we were doing an environmental assessment to try to understand what else we could do on that property.

I've been open for months and months about the possibility that we could move more services to Park Street.

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

G. McNeilly: So, you informed the public at a public meeting that the public couldn't speak at, had to write down their answers to, couldn't participate in, that you were making plans without them and the entire community. Minister, I don't understand.

Then, in the press conference, you said, "Hey, you know what? I'm making this announcement. Now I'm going to over to Park Street and Beach Street and consult with the residents right now."

How do you think it's appropriate for you to make an announcement – you just said it happened twice, just twice in the row, and then you're going to go out and speak to the residents after a press conference.

What did they say to you, and why didn't you do that before?

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

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

As I said yesterday, the results of the environmental assessment that we were awaiting were only received within the past two to three weeks. As I said yesterday, the work is still ongoing, but we do have enough information now. That's why we were able to come forward over the past few weeks and formulate a plan for moving forward.

Now, I did have meetings scheduled with people who live on Beach Street and, knowing that we were moving forward with these plans, something was coming together. It would have been very inconsiderate of me to meet with them and discuss this situation without being able to reveal how we were moving. I was extremely busy, we had to reschedule some of those, and I thought it was more appropriate to meet with them afterwards to actually explain our way forward.

Now, we had very productive discussions. I've had phone calls. I've had text messages from people on Beach Street just this morning; having very respectful discussions with them about what we're doing, trying to keep them informed.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Food Banks Canada recently released their HungerCount report for 2023. From 2022 to 2023, PEI experienced a 26.9 percent increase in the total number of visits to Island food banks; the highest rate of increase of any Atlantic province.

Addressing food insecurity

A question for the Minister of Social Development and Seniors: What responsibility does your government hold for the many Islanders going hungry each day?

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

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

[1:50 p.m.]

We take hunger on Prince Edward Island very seriously, as you know. We've served over half a million meals to the children in the school system last year. This summer, we served over 50,000 meals for the summer program. I'm not sure if you're aware of that.

We do take hunger and food insecurity on Prince Edward Island very, very seriously. Last year, I believe we gave the food banks over \$650,000. We do take it seriously, and we're moving forward to continue to work with the food banks and everybody on Prince Edward Island that needs help with food insecurity.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am aware of all the food initiatives that your government has. This report notes that 33.6 of PEI food bank clients were children, yet this government has a legislated commitment to eliminate food insecurity by 2025. That is less than two years away, to eliminate food insecurity while our numbers skyrocket. Not enough.

Question to the Minister of Social Development: With so many children going hungry, do you believe you're on track to end childhood food insecurity by 2025?

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

Hon. B. Ramsay: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you again for that question.

We're working towards that, that's for sure. We continue to feed our children. Again, we're on target this year for the same amount of free food in the school system, as well as our summer program for the children. I believe you were talking about the children; I think that's what you had mentioned.

We're continuously working to ensure that the children of Prince Edward Island are fed. Nobody needs to be hungry. I'm just really proud of this government. This is an unprecedented program, to feed every child that's in school from Monday to Friday, and the whole summer program. This is not anywhere else in the country.

I'm very proud of this government for what they're doing for our children here on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you very much.

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

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Pride is not going to help you reach the law that has been set out by 2025, so set your pride aside and get to work.

Food insecurity is also an issue that affects working-age Islanders. In fact, 59.5 percent of food bank clients are working-age adults, yet we rarely, if ever, hear what government is doing to promote food security within this demographic.

Question to the minister: What is government doing to move beyond food charity to ensure that all Island households have consistent access to good healthy meals? I know you said you gave money to the food bank. What else are you doing for them?

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

Hon. B. Ramsay: Thank you for that question, Madam Speaker.

Well, we continue to work with the children, making sure our children are fed. We continue to work with the food banks, in conversations with the food banks over the last few weeks, ensuring that they are okay.

As for other folks who need – this department and this government has a program with the United Way, the 211 program, and for anyone needing help with any type of situation regarding food or any other service that they may be looking for, they can call the 211 number.

Again, the food banks and our school food program; we just continue to do – do we have it all worked out? Absolutely not. But are we working towards it, and are we doing more than any other province across the country? Absolutely, and I'm very proud to say that.

The other thing that we're doing is our social assistance program. We pay the highest funding in social assistance across the country. Thank you very much for that question, and I'm going to sit down now.

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

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

Our mobile mental health units have been operational for two years now, and they are providing a really critical part of mental health services to Islanders who are in acute distress.

Mobile mental health units

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Are you satisfied with the level of service that these units are providing?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I look forward to having the opportunity to always talk about the mobile mental health units. Back about a month ago, we hosted the health ministers from across the country, and I explained the program to them. They

were amazed at what we've done. They said it would take 10 years to mobilize a service like that in some of those larger provinces.

We're very happy with what we accomplished with the mobile mental health units and we'll continue to work on improving that service.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

[1:55 p.m.]

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

Seamless, reliable communications are really essential for this service to work well, which is, obviously, frequently dealing with Islanders who are in a life-and-death situation.

A few weeks ago, Islanders learned that a significant breakdown in communications has existed since the inception of these units between the City of Charlottetown police and the units themselves.

Last year, the Charlottetown police received close to 2,000 mental health calls while the mobile mental health units responded to just a few hundred calls across this province. This fatal flaw contributed significantly to the death of at least one Islander.

To the same minister who is happy with the service that these units are providing: What did you do when you learned nine months ago that a flaw in one of your programs resulted in the death of an Islander?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I think it's important to understand that, again, mental health issues sometimes crisscross with criminality. Again, we do rely on the police service to understand when the police should be deployed. I think they need to err on the side of caution when

they do receive a call that may be exhibiting mental health issues but also the safety.

Again, for the safety of our mobile mental health teams, I think it's important that our police do respond when appropriate. Meetings are ongoing to coordinate that, to make their services aware of mobile mental health, because when there's not a safety issue present for both the police and the mobile mental health staff, I think it's appropriate for that response.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: That was quite a response. Erring on the side of caution, which is what the minister is advocating for, led to the death of an Islander because of miscommunication.

That's not erring on the side of caution. Erring on the side of caution would protect Islanders who are in need.

Witnesses from Health PEI confirmed that they have known about this issue since January of this year. That's over nine months ago, and yet, no efforts – at least up until two weeks ago – have been made to rectify this problem; a problem, again, led to death of an Islander.

Minister, the person responsible for this: When can Islanders expect you to fix this unacceptable and horrible mess so that nobody else dies?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Obviously, I don't want to speak about one particular incident again, but I think it's important that we recognize also that the 988 service will be enacted on PEI, the suicide prevention line, which has some good visibility.

Again, the mobile mental health is a valuable service, especially in following patients after they're discharged from hospital. We do 1,100 follow-up calls to

people who are leaving hospital after a mental health challenge, and statistics show that those first seven days after discharge are the most at risk.

Again, it's a great service and we'll continue to improve it and make it better for Islanders.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

J. Fox: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm confused. According to the global climate experts, we are living in a climate emergency and every area in the world is being affected. We must do everything we can to cut down on the greenhouse gases and the carbon-emitting sources. I do agree that the climate is changing.

But I want to point out, burning one cubic metre of wood emits an equivalent of driving a modern car 180,000 kilometres.

Environmental impact of Hurricane Fiona waste

Question to the Minister of Environment: Have you not been promoting the switch to reducing our carbon emission as it applies to heat and the reduction of greenhouse gases from industry across the province, and also on the world stage?

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

Hon. S. Myers: I don't know if this is a setup question or a setup question, Madam Speaker, but I'll take the bait. [Laughter]

We have the most aggressive strategy in all of North America to get to net zero. We have been promoting it. We have displaced seven million litres of furnace oil last year alone. Those are impressive numbers for Prince Edward Island. That accounts for 35% of our emissions from home heating alone.

And yeah, it has taken us to the world stage. We're getting noticed everywhere. I think that, as I've said numerous times, Islanders should be proud of what we're doing

because we are getting attention for being so progressive in our policies when it comes to greening not only our economy but to taking climate action seriously.

I thank you for the question.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, your first supplementary.

[2:00 p.m.]

J. Fox: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Last evening, after numerous complaints, I learned that this Province – this provincial government – hired a company from away to burn over 20,000 cubic metres of Fiona waste located at the Borden yard alone, which is emitting unbelievable amounts of greenhouse gases and particulates into the environment, has caused a business to shut down because of air quality, and also, a school contemplated being evacuated.

Question to the Minister of Environment: Does this not go against everything the Province has been trying to do to lessen our greenhouse gas emittance and reduce carbon output?

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

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

I would say evacuating schools would go against any policy that we would have, unless we needed to evacuate schools and that policy was invoked. So, any environmental policy shouldn't evacuate schools.

But I do know that there is a burn unit that's basically an air curtain or a burn curtain; it's not supposed to have any emissions. It's not my department, it's the Department of Transportation who is taking care of that particular part of it. The Department of Transportation is taking care of it, I can guarantee you, because they have the people on site doing it.

We're using the remnants of it, which is called biochar, as an agricultural example of how we can use biochar to sink carbon into the soil and to add nutrients to it to make it

so that we have a better agricultural base for our farmers to reduce their nitrogen use here in the province.

So, if there's something happening there that that unit's not working right, then I'm sure that the Minister of Transportation will fix it for you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, your second supplementary.

J. Fox: I wish only, Madam Speaker, that you could table video.

The tender went out and five bids were received: one to burn and emit tonnes of carbon and pollutants into the air, and proposals also to chip and shred the 20,000 cubic metres of brush, trees, and limbs, and use as biomass and for other purposes.

Question to the Minister of Environment. I know it's the Minister of Transportation's, but you're Minister of Environment. You're supposed to be overseeing this stuff.

Question to the Minister of Environment: Why would the Province pick burning and further polluting the environment over a more environmentally friendly way of disposing of the 20,000 cubic metres of waste which is equivalent to driving 3.5 billion kilometres in a modern car, or was it just to save a few bucks?

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

Hon. S. Myers: Thank you.

I know, no. That's like a trip to the moon and back, I guess, is what I'm being told. So, we've added the equivalent emissions of a trip to the moon and back, according to the member over there.

But what I will tell him is this: I don't know what other options you thought were more environmentally friendly. Letting it rot in the ground, which is also a carbon emission? As it rots, it will emit carbon.

As you know, we had the most aggressive cleanup of any wind event ever on Prince Edward Island when we went right onto people's properties and helped clean up. It was much appreciated, as I found out when I

went to the doorsteps here back in the spring. People really appreciated that we were there to help them. We had to do something with it. Is burying it a better option than burning?

J. Fox: Chip it. Shred it. Use it as biomass.

Speaker: The minister has the floor.

Hon. S. Myers: If I used it as biomass, I would have the exact same emissions that you're talking about. If we burned that at the hospital, we would have the exact same emissions that you're talking about.

So, your issue is that there was a fire and there was more smoke than was anticipated. I'll definitely look into that because I think that's a serious issue.

The remnants of that will be a biochar which we'll put on farmers' fields, we think will hold nutrients, we think will hold water, we think will reduce the use of nitrogen, we think will reduce the need of irrigation type of things, and Madam Speaker, I'll tell the hon. member that that pilot project is happening in Malpeque.

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

[2:05 p.m.]

H. MacLennan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Fiona, there was a heightened interest by communities in becoming warming centres in the event that they would be needed by residents in future events.

One of those communities is in my district, in Lot 16. They have a little hall and they want to equip it as a warming centre. During Fiona, both bridge accesses into the community were cut off.

Support for new warming centres

I have a question to the Minister of Transportation: How does Island Waste Management Corporation decide where to assign the waste carts to?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. E. Hudson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank the hon. member for the question. I certainly give kudos to the hon. member, always a great advocate for his district.

IWMC has a policy in place that the carts are only provided to households. We could argue or look at whether that's appropriate or not, but I do know that that is policy that the Crown corporation IWMC has in place.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, your first supplementary.

H. MacLennan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The reason that I ask this is because one of the requirements to become a warming centre is to have waste services. When the community looked into this, they were told that the hall didn't qualify to receive carts, which seemed strange to me when I heard about it. Apparently because the hall doesn't pay property tax, they don't qualify for a cart.

Question to the Minister of Transportation: Does it make sense that a community hall looking to become a warming centre wouldn't meet the criteria to have a couple of waste carts?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. E. Hudson: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and again, thank the hon. member for the question.

Short answer: no.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, your second supplementary.

H. MacLennan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I think that we should try to encourage communities to try to prepare to support

their residents in a time of need and emergency. If there's a policy that serves as a roadblock to communities developing warming centres, then maybe that's something to take a look at.

Question to the Minister of Transportation: Would you commit to having the relevant policies reviewed so that communities don't face extra roadblocks to establishing warming centres?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. E. Hudson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and again, thank the hon. member for the question.

Later this week, I actually do have a meeting set up with the CEO of IWMC. This will definitely be on the agenda for discussion. I would more than welcome the participation and the attendance of the hon. member if it works into his schedule to attend that meeting as well.

The other thing is that I know that it does take a certain amount of time to adjust, to change policies. Having said that, I know that there are a number of programs throughout government to help volunteer organizations, community halls to set up warming centres. In the meantime, I would commit to work with the hon. member to identify other areas of funding that may be able to be of assistance.

If you would indulge me for 15-20 seconds, with regard to the questions that had come forward to my colleague, the Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action, I would just like to clarify for the hon. member that that matter has been taken care of, has been resolved.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

G. McNeilly: Question to the Minister of Housing.

A lot of people took time to talk about this, and this is a major problem about unhoused people and what we're doing in Prince Edward Island. But I ask the Minister of

Housing, at the end of March this year, you had contracts lapse with both the Adventure Group, the Salvation Army, scattered housing, transitional housing; those contracts are not signed as per then.

Contracts re: shelter, housing

Question to the minister: You're talking about supports for Islanders, but we don't have signed contracts? That's a violation of Treasury Board. Minister, are the contracts with the Adventure Group and Salvation Army signed right now and why weren't they signed when they were supposed to be?

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

Hon. R. Lantz: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the question.

I think we went over this in the spring. That is that all of our contracts have continuation clauses and they continue under the same terms and conditions as the previous contract until a new one is signed.

[2:10 p.m.]

I can say with regard to the Adventure Group contract, as far as I know, it's finalized. I believe it may be in the process of Treasury Board, so it should be signed at some point in the very near future. I would say that based on this process that we're embarked upon, reviewing what the model will look like, we're cognizant that we may have to make revisions of that contract as we go forward.

But the answer to your question is, it will be signed soon.

Speaker: End of Question Period.

Statements by Ministers

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

Recognizing Athletes at Pan Am Games

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

Recently, three Island athletes competed at the Pan Am Games in Chile and had very

impressive performances. I would like to recognize and congratulate Hannah Taylor, Martin Sobey, and Alysha Corrigan. Competing at the games is a tremendous feat, but to come home with silver medals and a fourth-place finish really shows their talent and competitive spirit, and we are all very proud of them.

Summerside's Hannah Taylor brought home the silver in wrestling. Hannah's determination has seen her make great strides in her sport. She also won a bronze medal in the 2022 Commonwealth Games, and her most recent win proves her hard work is paying off.

Martin Sobey of Charlottetown finished fourth in the triathlon. This event tests the will and drive of any athlete, and Martin exemplifies this. Competing in such a grueling sport pushes the limits of competition and discipline. His no-quit attitude is something he should be very proud of.

Charlottetown's Alysha Corrigan demonstrated team spirit as Canada's women's Sevens rugby team brought home the silver medal after a hard-fought battle against the United States. Alysha previously competed at the highest level of the sport, taking part in events such as the Rugby World Cup. She was a key part of the team's victory in Chile, and we look forward to seeing her continue to excel.

Seeing our athletes compete at the highest level of their respective sports is something all Islanders should be proud of. They've spent years developing their skills to meet their goals, and they are truly inspirational.

Thank you for representing PEI on the world stage. You should be very proud. On behalf of the members of this House, I extend a huge congratulations to Hannah, Martin, and Alysha.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

R. Henderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I, too, want to congratulate those three particular athletes: Hannah Taylor, Martin Sobey, and Alysha Corrigan. Sport is a great character builder for people, and I certainly believe that when you commit to the discipline that it takes to excel as an elite athlete, good things will happen. So, to see some of them as medal winners and be close to the podium is only going to bode well for us in future competitive events.

I look at back 2023; we did host the Canada Games here in Prince Edward Island, and although those athletes may not always be directly participating in the Pan Am in the same year, they're going to be the future athletes for potential Pan Am Games, and hopefully even for the Olympics.

I commend the minister for acknowledging their achievements and I would like to pass on that same congratulations to those particular athletes.

Thanks.

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

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

I, too, would like to congratulate Hannah, Martin, and Alysha.

If anybody heard Hannah being interviewed following her silver medal, she came that close to winning; within a hair, actually, if I can use that expression. They were tied 6-6 with literally a couple of seconds to go, and the other athlete threw her, and Hannah claimed that she had used her hair – Hannah's hair – in the process, and that actually, Hannah was worthy of a gold medal. The decision on that didn't go her way, but to hear her talk about it, it drives home how close she was to bringing a gold medal back here to the Island. Silver medal, of course, nothing to be sneezed at. What an amazing, amazing accomplishment.

Martin Sobey, who finished in 1:46 in the triathlon, the first of the male Canadians to cross the line in that race; just a fabulous achievement, and I hope that Martin will be able to go on to the Olympic Games as a result of his result in this.

And Alysha, of course, was part of the women's rugby Sevens. What a fantastic team effort that is. We have a great tradition of rugby here on Prince Edward Island, and so many of the high schools have fantastic rugby teams, whether they be on the male or the female side. To see one of our own athletes take home a silver medal as part of the national Sevens team is a really heartening thing.

[2:15 p.m.]

Congratulations to them and all the Canadian athletes, but to go three for three with Island athletes at the Pan Am Games is quite an amazing achievement. Congratulations to them all.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

College of Physicians and Surgeons of PEI

Hon. M. McLane: Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of some of the strides the College of Physicians and Surgeons of PEI has recently taken to allow for more physicians to come practice in PEI.

The college recently issued a release of these changes on November 2nd. In November of 2021, the college came under the *Regulated Health Professions Act*, supported by the Medical Practitioners Regulations. Further updates to legislation were approved in June of 2023. It is through the changes to legislation that the college was able to implement new policies, allowing for expansion of eligibility criteria and several new processes.

The requirements for registration are drastically reduced for physicians who actively hold general licensure and are in good standing in another Canadian jurisdiction, leading to a faster processing timeframe through the extra-provincial pathway.

What's most exciting is USA family medicine physicians and specialist physicians who hold active American Board certification and have an acceptable alternative to the Licentiate of the Medical

Council of Canada, the LMCC, are no longer required to have eligibility to obtain Canadian certification. Huge.

Successful applicants can obtain general registration with no conditions or restrictions. For example, in the past, a Canadian citizen could attend Harvard Medical School, do their residency at the Mayo Clinic, and could not easily practice in Canada. That is no longer the case.

Another issue with regard to these new changes is the Canadian Resident Matching Service. There's an estimate of about 1,800 Canadian citizens at medical institutions throughout the world on an annual basis; only about 400 or them or less are placed for Canadian residency. Now, many of them go to the US to be placed for their residency. In those cases, we can never bring them back. Now it's very much possible, so I'm very, very excited by this.

I have a constituent who just started in Ireland. Megan, you can come and practice in Canada.

Also, family medicine physicians who hold active certification in family medicine from the UK, Ireland, or Australia and have an acceptable alternative to the LMCC are no longer required to have eligibility to obtain Canadian certification. Successful applicants can obtain general registration with no conditions or restrictions.

Specialists who have training from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada's approved jurisdiction list which includes seven countries, and have an acceptable alternative to the LMCC, may be eligible to receive registration prior to holding eligibility to obtain Canadian certification.

Successful applicants who hold Subspecialty Examination Affiliate Program designation from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada and have an acceptable alternative to the LMCC may be eligible to obtain general registration with no conditions or restrictions.

As previously announced, an agreement between the four Atlantic Provinces to allow physicians who successfully opt in to practice in all four provinces via the Atlantic

registry – physicians who join via New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, or Nova Scotia do not have to provide the college any registration documents. All required information is shared between the colleges in each province.

These are just some of the many new policies implemented and expansions of eligibility criteria. I would encourage everyone to go read the release from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of PEI that they shared on November 2nd. With these changes, the college has helped to broaden our health care team. These changes provide an avenue for trained health care workers who have significant skills to become licensed professionals in our health system and in our communities at a time when we need them most.

I want to recognize the tremendous work of the College of Physicians and Surgeons. I called Dr. Carruthers this morning to thank him for all his work and I was so excited. I'm excited about the changes that can happen. We are making a difference in our health care system and we are working hard to continue to improve care.

We know there is still work to be done and we will continue to work with the college and all our other partners to improve access to care for all Islanders.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

[2:20 p.m.]

G. McNeilly: Thank you for talking about this announcement. It has very little to do with the Province. I want to thank the college, Dr. Carruthers, and everybody else, but this has very little to do – and it's very much a first step to look at eligibility.

We are in a crisis here, minister. What I'm worried about is the fact that we just scrapped the Doctors Hiring Doctors program not a week ago. Are you trying to change the channel here? Because we are struggling with this so much and some criteria from a few different places and talking about specialists is not going to help

because the plan after that is not there. That's what I'm worried about.

I sat as the chair of the standing committee and watched all these issues, and I'm very worried about the state of our health care system when we're shutting down ICU beds in Summerside. You talked about specialists, but we can't hire those specialists to Summerside anymore. We have to do better, and we have to have a plan that's ready to meet the college when they make these criteria so that we get doctors here. That's where we're falling down.

Minister, as much as I think it's great that we stand up and talk about some criteria – and that's what we need in various other communities to open this up – every other jurisdiction in Canada will be after the same doctors. We need a plan to make sure that we are there, ready to get them if they're able to come here and they want to come to Prince Edward Island and sell that it's a great place to work.

We need both cultural changes and we need leadership at the top. I think that's where it's got to start: with you. As much as I wanted to come up and say these are great, these are fantastic, expansion and everything else, it has nothing to do with the government because you have not done a good job on this file. So, if it's a changing of the channel here today, it didn't go over very well on this side.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

These are great. These are fantastic. Of course, the College of Physicians and Surgeons are the ones who ultimately make the decisions on what the licensing requirements will be, but government has to be there behind them as well. I really appreciate this announcement. It's very positive.

I have a personal experience with this. I came as a British dentist in the early '80s to Canada. I'll tell you, the licensing exams to

be allowed to work as a dentist in Canada were brutal. I had to go through four stages. I had to take my own patients – I was living in Newfoundland at the time – to Vancouver and work on them there. Let me put it this way, the licensing exams in that day were designed to keep people out because we had plenty of homegrown medical folks in Canada at that time. Clearly, that's not the case here and we have to open the doors wider and we have to do it quickly.

But we also have to do it safely. We have to make sure that all of these licensing changes we make are anchored in public safety. I have absolute confidence that the national body and our provincial body here, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, will find that balance. Yes, we need more – and it's not just doctors, specialists, or GPs or whatever they are. I asked questions yesterday in the House about nurses and loosening up the requirements for them to be here.

Everywhere has a need for more medical frontline health care workers. This is a good step in that direction, and I will be unambiguous in my support of this.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Senior Islander of the Year Awards

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

I rise today to congratulate the Island Seniors of the Year.

On October 26th, the Department of Social Development and Seniors hosted the Senior Islander of the Year awards at the Rodd in Charlottetown. It was an opportunity to recognize the outstanding contributions of Island seniors to communities across the province in areas like volunteering, fundraising, and business.

Since 2010, more than 60 Islanders have been recognized with this award, including the six recipients this year. It is with great pleasure that I acknowledge the award winners: Georgina Knockwood Crane from St. Andrews; Mari Basiletti from Canoe

Cove; Myron Yates from Glencoe; Bernadette Gallant from St. Louis; Anne Marie Richard from Tignish; and Betty Begg-Brooks from Charlottetown.

[2:25 p.m.]

These six winners are a deserving group of individuals who are enhancing Island life through the work that they do. They remind us that age is no limit when it comes to making a difference. It was wonderful to celebrate them alongside their families and friends, and their MLAs were there; thank you for coming.

I would like to thank the Seniors' Secretariat for their work in reviewing nominations and helping to narrow it down to our six recipients. It was not an easy task. In fact, every year the number of people nominated for the Senior Islander of the Year Award increases, an indication of the incredible work being done by Island seniors.

I would like to say that while we handed out six awards, we could have handed out a hundred. There are so many seniors in PEI doing incredible work from tip to tip.

Please join me in celebrating Georgina, Mari, Myron, Bernadette, Anne Marie, and Betty.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, minister.

A great announcement, a great event. The Leader of the Opposition and myself just want to thank you for inviting us to attend and to support our constituents. That was really nice of you. There's been a lapse in that, so I wanted to say thank you.

It was a very, very nice ceremony. It was neat hearing about the accomplishments of our seniors. They've done so very much in our community. I just want to say thanks a lot for Betty Begg-Brooks, who has done an incredible amount. She's a constituent in District 14. She's done an incredible amount, along with many others.

We have to remember that the seniors and what they do – they contribute to their communities – they are really the backbone of events, traditions, history, everything in the community that they keep alive. Keep going. It's great to see that the minister will be there to support them. I think we have some work to do in the senior files, but we'll talk about it another time.

[Interjections]

G. McNeilly: Yeah, exactly.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I would just like to thank the minister for bringing this forward and to take this opportunity to congratulate the six seniors who were the recipients of these awards.

I can imagine it was not an easy task when you consider how many seniors we have across the Island who give of their time and their selves and their resources to make things better in Prince Edward Island. That's an impressive list right there.

As I read through some of their bios and some of the things that they do, I mean, it would take forever to go through all of them but I just thought I'd pick out a couple of things.

These are people who are volunteers. They're people who are stepping up to be the change that they want to see in the world. They're community-builders. They're at the centre of their communities and they're making what they want to see happen, happen, and they're helping lift others up as well. They're giving of their culture, their time, their resources, their love, and themselves. What an incredible thing to be able to give to someone without asking for anything in return except to make your community better.

The list of community organizations that have been named, the list of community groups is incredible, and they represent everyone from children to youth to adults to

seniors, families, and everybody in between there.

I would just like to thank Betty Begg-Brooks, Georgina Knockwood Crane, Mari Basiletti, Myron Yates, Bernadette Gallant, and Anne Marie Richard for their selflessness and for giving their time and themselves to make the world a better place.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Speaker: The hon. Clerk.

Clerk: Madam Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly, in accordance with the ... petitions, I wish to advise that a petition has been presented at the table from Amalgamated Dairies Ltd. praying for a private bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend an Act to Incorporate Amalgamated Dairies Limited*. I wish to advise that the petition as presented is proper with respect to form and content and that a draft bill will be prepared in anticipation of first reading.

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

[2:30 p.m.]

J. Fox: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table an estimated losses valued at \$1,758,088 CAD to Brackley Bay Oyster Company due to silt runoff caused by a land developer that was investigated by the provincial Environment officer, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora

J. Fox: Madam Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the spec sheets on the Tigercat 6050 Carbonator, which is a waste-burning system that emits directly into the environment, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-

Sherbrooke, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

J. Fox: Madam Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table photographs taken last night and this morning of the Tigercat 6050 Carbonator emitting large volumes of smoke into the environment around Borden-Kinkora, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

B. Trivers: Madam Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a list of accomplishments by Marion Reid, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

B. Trivers: Madam Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the eulogy for Marion Reid, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table *HungerCount 2023: When is it enough?* It is the report by Food Banks Canada that gives us a glimpse into food insecurity in Canada, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Madam Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table – I'm going to table four documents here. The Premier asked yesterday for solutions. There are four that were written for government, so I will give them back to him. I beg leave to table *Eastern PEI Housing Analysis Final Report*, August 2019, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Madam Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a document entitled *Needs Analysis of Housing Supports in the Prince County Region of Prince Edward Island*, January 26, 2021, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a document entitled, *Findings of a Community Needs Assessment on Emergency Shelters*, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a document entitled, *Develop West Prince, Unleashing our Potential: Housing Needs Assessment* from January 31st, 2023 – this is a new one you may not have seen yet – and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

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

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a position paper by the Canadian Psychiatric Association, *Principles Underlying Mental Health Legislation*, and I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Third Party, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Hon. G. Arsenault: Madam Speaker, by Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table the French translation of the Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture annual report for the period ending March 31st, 2023, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Hon. G. Arsenault: Madam Speaker, by Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table the French translation of the Summerside Regional Development Corporation annual report for the period ending March 31st, 2023, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

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 31st order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Point of Order

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

[2:35 p.m.]

M. MacKay: I rise on a point of order as to Rule 65(3), which says a private member's bill can't imply the expenditure of public funds or the imposition of any tax. Bill 106 implies the expenditures of public funds, and we ask that no further debate occur on the bill until the Speaker returns with a ruling to the House.

I'm just wondering if we could have a short recess just to discuss that.

Speaker: No, we don't need a short recess. I'll speak to it.

Bill No. 106 is not out of order. It is not a so-called money bill. It does not either impose taxes or appropriate public money, therefore the bill does not require Royal Recommendation from the Lieutenant Governor. In fact, section 13 of the bill provides, "The moneys required for the purpose of ... subsections (11) and (12) shall be paid out of moneys appropriated for that purpose by the Legislature."

This clause has been used in private members' bills for a number of years. The bill providing for free well water testing in 2021, No. 116, contained this clause and the government decided to appropriate the moneys required in its subsequent budgets.

Thank you, members.

Orders Other Than Government

Speaker: The hon. Clerk.

Clerk: Order No. 31, *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*, Bill No. 106, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 106, *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I move, seconded by the Honourable 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 Morell-Donagh to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

[S. MacEwen in the chair]

Chair: The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intitled *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*.

Hon. member, would you like to make a motion to bring a stranger to the floor?

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

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Welcome. Could you introduce yourself and your title for Hansard?

Robert Godfrey: My name is Robert Godfrey and I'm the director of policy and research for the Official Opposition office.

Chair: Thank you, Rob.

Hon. member, would you like an initial statement to begin?

Hon. H. Perry: Sure. Thank you very much, Chair.

[2:40 p.m.]

This decision to bring this amendment to the *Employment Standards Act* forward because Islanders shouldn't have to make a choice between their health and their livelihoods. For that reason, I did introduce yesterday paid sick leave legislation to address the affordability crisis that working Islanders are facing.

It's an essential step in improving economic security and affordability for the middle class, single-income households, and those hit hardest by the rising cost of living here on Prince Edward Island. The absence of paid sick days disproportionately affects working Islanders living paycheque to paycheque and leaves workers without a safety net during times of illness.

We had an extensive consultation process, and we'll get into that a little bit later, I'm sure, about who we spoke to. We did have a lot of feedback on this. We put forward what we thought was probably the legislation that best suited and best balanced all the information that came back to us, and what we're asking for in this is five days of paid sick leave for year-round permanent employees.

The first three will be available after 90 days of consecutive employment, and the next two will be available after 180 days of consecutive employment with the same employer. This will not be allowed to carry over for the following year.

Just to put in context for what's presently today, Island workers are entitled to three unpaid sick days and one additional sick day after five years of consecutive employment with the same employer.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you, member.

I'll ask the committee, is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Chair: Alright.

1. Subsection 5.3(1) of the *Employment Standards Act* R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. E-6.2, is amended by the addition of the following after clause (g):

(g.1) the amount of any paid sick leave to which the employee is entitled.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

M. MacKay: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, hon. member, for bringing this bill.

As we get going, there are going to be some questions, I'm sure, on consultation, but just kind of high level, if you could kind of give us who you consulted and what their feedback was.

The reason I ask this is, something similar to this bill was last session and I know there was quite a bit of conversation about whether there was enough consultation done. I just want to find out what consultation you've done on it.

Hon. H. Perry: Chair, it's not (Indistinct) to this clause, but do I have the okay to go ahead and respond to that?

Chair: Do you wish to take general questions at this time?

Hon. H. Perry: I have no problem with that.

Chair: Okay.

Hon. H. Perry: Okay, thanks.

I'm assuming you want a list of every stakeholder that we reached out to?

M. MacKay: Every stakeholder and what their response was.

Hon. H. Perry: Okay, and what their response was?

M. MacKay: Yes, if they were in favour or if they weren't in favour.

Hon. H. Perry: Well, I'm not sure if I have the information right in front of me of all that. I do have all the stakeholders that commented, but Rob may have...

Robert Godfrey: We reached out to 40 different organizations and industry groups, composed of industry business community, the employee groups, and general stakeholders. We got responses from a number of them. We did not get responses from all, but all were consulted in the form of a letter and providing the legislation as you now have in front of you.

M. MacKay: The only reason I ask these questions is a similar bill last session has come to the floor before and there was a lot of communication that didn't seem to have happened, and there was a lot of groups that basically said that they weren't consulted.

If some of those individuals didn't respond back to an email, were there any follow-up calls on that?

Robert Godfrey: Yes, there was. There were a number of phone calls. Everybody got a phone call and an email.

M. MacKay: Am I right in saying that this initial consultation that was done, the number that was used was three business days and not five?

Robert Godfrey: The initial bill was three days, yes, it was.

M. MacKay: Since the three days is no longer and it's now five days, can you explain where that came from? And all the consultations that were done with the three days, did you go back to them and suggest the bill was changing to five?

[2:45 p.m.]

Robert Godfrey: Did you want to answer that?

Hon. H. Perry: No, you can go ahead.

Robert Godfrey: No. What we did is, based on the feedback that we received from the 40 different groups, we compiled that feedback and arrived at five days.

M. MacKay: What was the reason for the change from three to five? What made that change?

Robert Godfrey: Actually, we looked at British Columbia. British Columbia has five paid sick days. Their model seemed to fit what we were looking to do. There was some expression of having 10 days, seven days, and we just made the decision based on looking at what BC has done as an example, relying on their model – five days, 90 days consecutive employment – and went with that.

M. MacKay: I'm curious, because the chambers across PEI were quite vocal on this previously. What is the opinion of the chambers on the five days?

Robert Godfrey: We met with the chambers, five of them together, a couple weeks ago. At that time, the bill was three days. We understood from them that a number of their members – I think it was 45 percent of their members – offered paid sick leave now. There seemed to be a split in their membership as to the opinion of how many days, whether there should be paid sick leave at all, and came from that meeting – meeting with organizations with the Federation of Labour who were arguing for 10, and made a decision internally after all the consultations were done to move forward with five days.

M. MacKay: My final question, Chair. You started working on this bill approximately when, hon. member?

Hon. H. Perry: It would have been early summer, I would say. Early summer.

M. MacKay: Okay, so with the consultations that have been done since early summer, do you find there's been enough consultation done? Are you comfortable with what has taken place, and the business community seems to be quite informed with what's going on?

Hon. H. Perry: If you're asking me if I'm comfortable, I am comfortable with the information that we have received, that we've gathered in the conversations that we've had, and in particular with the chambers who represent thousands of businesses right across the Island. When we

presented it, it was in draft form. It was articulated that it was in draft form and that there was a possibility that the number could go up to five.

M. MacKay: Okay. Thank you, Chair. I'm good.

Chair: Shall the section carry?

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

Hon. J. Redmond: Thank you, Chair.

I just wanted to ask a couple questions. We know paid sick leave is very important, and it's certainly been a topic relating to workers and employers for some time, so this conversation is important and timely, for sure.

My concern, I guess, and the question I know that my fellow member has been asking is around the split days. When talking and consulting the idea around three days, and you had a split decision on that from chambers, and they're the voices for some respective groups, for sure, and then to go to five – they're aware that the presentation is five?

Chair: Just one second, hon. member. So, we have agreed to go clause by clause.

Hon. J. Redmond: Oh, sorry. Sorry.

Chair: I'll ask the promotor of the bill if he's okay with the question. We can just open it up for general questions on any part of the bill, or if we want to keep going clause by clause, we should stick to questions about the clause that's on –

Hon. J. Redmond: Sorry, my apologies.

Chair: So, I'll go to the promotor of the bill, if you're okay to entertain this question, and then after that, maybe we'll stick to each of the clauses.

Hon. H. Perry: Sure. Do you want to respond to that?

Robert Godfrey: Respond to her question?

Hon. H. Perry: Yeah, about feedback (Indistinct)

Robert Godfrey: Could you repeat the question?

Hon. J. Redmond: Yeah, certainly. So, I'm just curious, when the bill was presented and the consultations were being done and it was at three, and you felt there was a split a bit in the direction they were thinking of going, to get their approval of three and then to jump to five, has there been a bit of a conversation back that that's going to change, that they're feeling...?

[2:50 p.m.]

Robert Godfrey: I think it's important to remember that we consulted with 40 different organizations, and while the chamber is certainly an important voice, I want to stress that there were groups that came and asked for 10. So, we started at three. The chamber, actually, their biggest concern was (Indistinct) financial compensation. Their biggest concern was about transitioning and finding financial funds to actually help this transition.

Anyway, after all those consultations, we went with five days.

Hon. J. Redmond: Okay, and the suggestions around the support for that, what were the results of that that they were looking for?

Robert Godfrey: Sorry?

Hon. J. Redmond: The supports that you're indicating that they are looking for to support this.

Robert Godfrey: In the bill, we talk about providing some kind of a transitional funding if the House decides to go forward with that.

Hon. H. Perry: The minister may sign off.

Robert Godfrey: Yeah. That was their biggest concern. Like I said, they had surveyed their members and there was a general split about paid sick leave. After consulting other organizations, we looked at BC, relied on their number, and went with five days.

Hon. J. Redmond: Was there concern the cost, what that would look like, or did we

talk about a number of what that would be at?

We've certainly looked at some from our department. This is a very important concern to Islanders and workers, and of course, I am fully aware of that, for sure. We just want to make sure that it is attainable for businesses so they can keep their staff as well.

Robert Godfrey: Yeah, I think we share that concern.

Hon. J. Redmond: Okay. There was a cost analysis completed? You have a cost analysis done?

Robert Godfrey: I don't have a cost analysis in front of me.

Hon. H. Perry: That's not for us to do. We gathered information from both, all stakeholders, which were employers and from the employee perspective. We spoke with unions that represent employees from tip to tip and we spoke with chambers who represent the business association from tip to tip.

With that information we gathered, we put it all together and we thought this would balance off of what the needs and the asks were from all of those who have given us input.

Hon. J. Redmond: Thank you.

I know there's been lots of conversation around when this would be applicable to employees and what the impact would be on a seasonal employee, from your analysis for your bill...?

Robert Godfrey: Well, we've gone with 90 days as we feel that after 90 days, with any general benefit that you may get with an employer, you've got to work three months or so before you really qualify, generally speaking. Went with that number, and then to get five, as my colleague has pointed out, you've got to work 180 days to get to the five.

Hon. J. Redmond: Can I ask one more question?

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

Hon. J. Redmond: I'm on my last question.

I'm also curious around the timeline, too, for adjustment for employers. There's the tiered kind of presentation of when this would happen after three months. Then, what would happen after 180 days or such for the tiers? Has it been concluded that that was a good timeline for employers to prepare financially to support?

Robert Godfrey: I think what the business community was saying was, yeah, give us time to prepare and explore with government about the appropriation of funds for a transitional fund that would help them adjust to the paid sick leave.

Hon. H. Perry: Chair, at this point, I'd like to adjourn debate on this bill. The reason why I'm wanting to do it, we wanted to bring it on the floor today because it's very, very important, but as the Minister of Housing had said earlier, it's very important that we also debate a motion that we put forward. We only have so much time. have 15 minutes left of our time today, and I think it's important that we get on to our motion.

At this time, I'd like to adjourn debate on this bill.

Chair: I don't believe you can adjourn debate, but you can put a motion forward to report progress and then that's a majority vote of the Assembly.

Hon. H. Perry: Yeah, that'll come, yeah.

Chair: But you have to put that motion forward now to report progress.

Hon. H. Perry: Yes.

Chair: Okay. There's a motion to report progress. All those in favour, say 'aye'.

Hon. H. Perry: I was going to read it off, sorry, but, yeah.

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Chair: All those against, 'nay'.

Some Hon. Members: Nay!

Chair: Alright, we'll report progress.

Hon. H. Perry: I'm sorry, Chair, I don't have the proper paper here with me.

Chair: I've got it for you here.

[2:55 p.m.]

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

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

[Hon. D. Compton in the chair]

S. MacEwen: Madam Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having under consideration a bill to be intituled *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.

Motions Other Than Government

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

At this time, I'll call Motion 63.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Housing, Land and Communities was speaking to the motion.

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

Yesterday, we addressed a few of the items in the preamble of the motion. One of them was the assertion that this is a sudden decision, and we talked about that in Question Period here, but I'll circle back to that again.

[3:00 p.m.]

It was delayed a long time to get to the point where we could make a decision. One of the reasons is the particular zoning of that property under the City's zoning and development bylaw. It's a comprehensive development area, and for any kind of

change of use on that type of property, that zoning, there's a very specific process to go through and it's a little bit more onerous than your run-of-the-mill rezoning.

One of those requirements is to have a site plan for the entire property – it's a large property – and you have to indicate exactly where the buildings that you intend to put there will be. So, as I stated yesterday, we've been in a bit of a holding pattern while that environmental assessment was undertaken because we needed that information to understand where we might be able to put the buildings and create a site plan that meets the city's requirements.

Again, that process was explained at the meeting in July, so it shouldn't come as a sudden surprise to anybody.

To be prudent, as a backup, you might say, I explored multiple alternate sites in the meantime. It's a discussion we've had within the department. It's an ongoing discussion, but just out of my own personal curiosity, I spent a lot of time driving around, looking at sites, calling landowners, and we did site visits. Most of them are off the table for one reason or another, but maybe they can be revisited.

Yesterday I recognized the problems with the current location and the service delivery model. I admitted we can do better. We've said that, as a government, we have no intention of having a gap in the delivery of those services. The Leader of the Opposition claimed on CBC –

An Hon. Member: Be careful.

Hon. R. Lantz: Well, no, he told me that I couldn't read well; I'm reading it right from the CBC. The quote – it had quotation marks around it – it said, "Shut the current centre down as it currently operates. Let the government go back to the drawing board." Now, that's skating the line pretty close, there. That's kind of sitting on the fence; doesn't really take a position one way or the other. Trying to have it both ways.

The Leader of the Opposition also said he made two phone calls to the outreach centre trying to get a tour arranged, but we can arrange a visit. Actually, you don't need to. You can stop in anytime. There's lots of

staff there who are always happy to give people a tour and show them what's happening inside the building. We went over this yesterday. That's important. That's important.

We understand what's happening outside in the streets, in the neighbourhood; we understand it's very problematic, but that's overshadowing what's going on inside. I encourage anyone, anyone here – many of you have already taken up the invitation to go and learn more –

[Interjections]

Speaker: The minister has the floor.

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

So, yeah, I am curious exactly what your position is. It sounded to me like you were calling for the centre to be closed and leaving vulnerable residents without services, as imperfect as they may be at this point.

[3:05 p.m.]

This whole motion – I alluded to this earlier – it seems to me that it may be an invitation almost, or a dare to the City to block this move and get the outreach centre closed on Euston Street, those services moved to Park Street.

Yesterday I talked about this complex national crisis that's escalated so quickly. It seems like a long time, but it's really only in recent years that this has become very, very acute.

It was interesting; the Member from New Haven-Rocky Point yesterday said nobody has done this well. All of you I know have the opportunity to travel outside this province. All you have to do is drive across the bridge. If you walk down Main Street in Moncton or Spring Garden Road in Halifax, there are literally shop doors that are locked. They're locked. You have to ring a buzzer to be let in. This is the world that we're living in. Open, rampant drug use. Homeless encampments are filling public parks in Halifax, other cities around this region.

We have to give ourselves some credit for what we've been able to do here. You have to give us some credit for what we have been able to do.

[Interjections]

Hon. R. Lantz: Madam Speaker, I have the floor.

Speaker: Hon. members, everyone gets a chance to speak to the motion and I believe that a number of members have already spoken to the motion. The minister has the floor. Continue, minister.

Hon. R. Lantz: I was listening to CBC Radio this morning. They were talking about the situation in Edmonton. There are outreach workers scrambling around Edmonton as the weather's dropping to sub-freezing temperatures, scrambling to make services available, to get people into shelters, to open more shelter beds. They said that two people have died in the past number of weeks in tent fires. Tent fires. Does that sound familiar? It's very unfortunate.

We've had a very dangerous incident here that could have ended in the same way. The individual has been charged. The victim who was actually in the tent was actually saved by staff at our Park Street shelter who saw what was going on, on the closed-circuit cameras that were put in place for the safety of the people in the shelter. Jumped the fence to help save this person.

I spoke with the victim's grandmother this morning; obviously, very upset about what happened. She's a constituent of mine. I asked about the history of her grandson and how he's doing and what his journey has been like, how he ended up in this situation. It was interesting to me because she didn't even tell me – she started sending me messages this morning – she didn't tell me that she was the grandmother of the victim. She contacted me to say: "Why is everything so negative? Why don't people talk about the good things that are happening?"

[3:10 p.m.]

I engaged in a conversation with her and I said, "Well, yeah, you know..." and we had

some back and forth. Then at that point she told me that one of her relatives is a client of the outreach centre, and the life coaching classes that he took there were extremely helpful for him. It turned him around to a certain point. He's doing better. He's had jobs. He hasn't been able to hold them, but the life coaching course that he took at the outreach centre was a turning point for him.

You all know it. There are personal stories. We all have connections. We all know people who are suffering in this crisis.

What is happening? We all ask ourselves that every day. But some things are beyond our control.

Speaker: Minister, time has been exhausted, if you could just adjourn debate, seconded.

Hon. R. Lantz: I move to adjourn debate, seconded by the Minister of Social Development and Seniors.

Thank you.

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

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

At this time, I ask that Motion No. 11 be now called.

Clerk: Madam Speaker, Motion 11 is currently under debate. Debate was adjourned by the mover, the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Madam Speaker, can I ask to table a bill before we go to that motion?

Speaker: Go ahead.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (No. 2)*, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from New Haven-Rocky Point, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you.

This bill amends the *Employment Standards Act* to expand –

Speaker: Hon. member, my mistake, my mistake. We've got to let the Clerk speak.

Clerk: Bill No. 107, *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (No. 2)*, read a first time.

Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Leader of the Third Party, try it again.

K. Bernard: Thank you.

This bill amends the *Employment Standards Act* to expand the availability of paid sick leave to workers. In short, it grants workers one day of sick leave per month to a maximum of five days in a calendar year; introduces record-keeping requirements for employers in relation to paid sick leave; and includes provisions related to a financial support program to support businesses through the transition to paid sick leave.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you. So, we're back to the motion now? Alright, thank you for that.

Did we read the motion?

Speaker: Yes, we did, and you adjourned debate, hon. member.

K. Bernard: Oh, that's right. The motion was read a long time ago.

Speaker: You are continuing debate.

K. Bernard: Yeah. I was thinking we had to read it again.

Speaker: And away you go.

K. Bernard: Debate had been started on this.

[Interjections]

K. Bernard: Yeah. Yeah, sorry. Okay. Alright, we're all on the same page.

A population growth strategy is connected to everything. It's connected to housing, to health care, to education, to the environment.

When people move into our province, of course, they need a place to live. They need a school to send their children to. They need a school to be equipped for their children. They're going to need access to health care, and they are going to have impacts on our environment, just like all of us do.

We can't expect this to go well if a government cannot be effective and have a clear vision and plan for the future of the Island. This is something that we've been lacking from the King government.

In June, we were told that the "finishing touches" were being put on a population growth strategy. Yet here we are, still waiting for it.

We have just shot past our projected growth already and we see the impacts of that in the fact that we've got record low vacancy rates. We've got the highest number, a growing number, of people on the patient registry. We've got development and building just out of control everywhere.

I am concerned for the Island if we don't figure this out, and a population growth strategy is a tool that we can use to do this. We need it, and we need it now.

[3:15 p.m.]

We heard in committee in October from the department that the strategy was being delayed again. Now we're in November, and guess what? We still don't have it. I don't know how we expect Islanders to have faith in a government who doesn't know where we're going or what we're doing with this aggressive population growth. It's irresponsible to not be prepared for people who we are inviting to come here. It's reckless.

Our population is growing faster than anywhere else in the country. PEI's population crossed the 180,000 mark in August. I'm going to repeat that. PEI's

population crossed 180,000 people in August. Government's own predictions in May estimated that PEI would reach 200,000 people by the year 2030, but at the current growth rates, PEI would hit that number by 2027. We're growing fast, and we're growing without a plan. That scares me. It's dangerous, it's reckless, and I hope it scares government too, to the point that we get this population growth strategy out ASAP.

I want to be clear when we talk about a population growth plan that we acknowledge the ways in which Islanders who have moved here from elsewhere are openly and unfairly blamed for crises that we have happening in our province. But I would shift that around. It's government who is growing our population. It is government who is responsible for ensuring that we have planned. We knew this population growth was coming, we knew it was, and yet years and years and years prior, there's been no planning for that.

We see that in the things I just mentioned: our record low vacancy rates, the patient registry numbers just growing and growing, despite the fact that we're opening medical homes that just don't seem to be making much of a difference.

This blaming people who are moving here is leading to discrimination, it's leading to xenophobia, and it's leading to instances of racism. It's wrong and it's unhelpful.

Often, it's newcomers who are most impacted by this lack of services when it comes to access to primary health care, housing, and finding affordable housing. There are so many barriers for them, especially if they don't speak the language, and trying to access... Not knowing how to navigate the system, especially when it's not in your language, is really challenging.

These harmful things that are happening to people are through government policy. While that may seem daunting, it's an opportunity because government policies can turn that around. We need a population growth strategy first to do that.

This motion also calls on government to improve coordination across departments to ensure a more holistic approach to

population growth. This is really important, and I have said this before in this House, but when I was listening to the committee meeting – I can't even remember when it was anymore, I think it was not this past spring, but the spring before. When I heard the department talk about the fact that – I believe it was something like: Why would housing be involved in a population growth strategy? Why would health care be involved in a population growth strategy? I almost fell off my chair.

If we can't see the connection – population growth is not just a piece of paper, it's actually people coming here. There are numbers of people coming here. To hear that there was no connection made by government between departments for a population growth strategy flabbergasted me.

In July, the Minister of Housing said this about the population strategy: "I've had a small briefing on, generally, our population strategy here in the province, but no, that's not a part of anything my department is involved with." How is housing not connected to population growth? Where do people live when they come here? That's a direct quote from the minister on that.

[3:20 p.m.]

How can we expect a comprehensive, fulsome population growth strategy if government departments aren't working together? I sincerely hope, for the betterment of everyone, that that's been a lesson learned and that we're going to see, reflected in the new population growth strategy, the connection between all the departments, because otherwise, we are setting ourselves up to fail.

All of the crises we're experiencing in our communities, whether they be mental health and addictions – whatever the crisis is, it's being exacerbated by people coming here and not having access to the things that they need. They're kind of being lumped into wherever they can find services, and it's not fair. It's not fair to the people coming here, and it's not fair to the people living here.

We expect government to table this strategy this sitting. If not, I think that we can take it as a very clear sign that managing the

population growth of the province, managing the province, is not really a priority. I don't want to believe that, but that's what I will believe if we do not see a population growth strategy tabled here in this sitting. The crises we're experiencing across the Island are not going to be magically transformed by a population growth strategy, but it will certainly help us in planning moving forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Before I commence my remarks, I'd just like to temporarily adjourn debate here so that another bill can be presented.

I move to adjourn debate, seconded by the Leader of the Third Party.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. There's a little confusion here today.

Madam Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intitled *An Act to Amend the Residential Tenancy Act*, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from New Haven-Rocky Point, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 108, *An Act to Amend the Residential Tenancy Act*, read a first time.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This bill extends the renovation moratorium from this year to next, in November 2024.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you.

I now move that Motion 11 be now read again.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Motion 11 is under debate. Debate was adjourned by the hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. Thank you to the House for allowing that little episode to occur.

It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this motion on a population growth strategy; a critical element of the future of this province, as the Leader of the Third Party has outlined in her remarks.

One of the operative clauses calls on government to "create a comprehensive population growth strategy that takes into account the impacts of population growth on PEI, particularly as it relates to public services, infrastructure, and our housing market."

I think all of us in this House, and indeed, every single Islander is acutely aware of the impacts of the rapid growth that we have had, the highest in the country by a country mile for a rather long time.

Of course, there are benefits that come with that. We saw in the blue books that were just recently released, the increase in revenues to the treasury as a result of this. Substantial; \$208 million, I believe, in extra taxation.

That's a lot of money in a province where the GDP is \$3 billion; \$208 million extra revenue represents not just a rounding error. That's a significant change in our financial status. Now, of course, there were extra expenditures associated with that, but when you're having impacts – and that's just one area in which the province is impacted because of – and not entirely due to population growth, but my goodness, that's the biggest driver when you see a discrepancy like that in our financial statements, the blue books. The population growth that we have experienced over the last couple of years – more than that,

actually, but referenced in that year's blue books – is clearly the main driver.

[3:25 p.m.]

For a province to do something as simple as – well, it's not simple, is it? – as figuring out what expenditures we can afford to make, whether that's in housing or health care or roads or social services or whatever the department is, we need to know approximately what we expect to take in so that we can expend an appropriate amount of money. We have not done that. We have an unexpected surplus and, of course, there are many who would be cheering that on. It's not all a bad thing.

However, a government cannot plan properly, it cannot plan accurately, it cannot plan well unless it knows more accurately than we have done what the revenues of this Province will be. I'm just talking about this because it's something that the Leader of the Third Party did not touch on in her remarks. It's a fundamental part of running a responsible, thoughtful, well managed government, to know where we are financially.

Currently – this isn't the first year that we've had a wild departure from the budget estimates. The realities in our blue book have been off for quite some time. Last year, I believe we had a \$68 million surplus at the end of the year, unexpected. This year, the surplus is a little bit less, but that's largely because of excess expenditures or extra, unexpected expenditures related to Fiona.

That's just one example of how important a population growth strategy is. Really, all it is, is saying government has to plan properly to provide the services required for every Islander. Every Islander is now, as the Leader of the Third Party said, over 180,000 of us. I remember when the Liberals held power here a few short years ago, the goal was to get to 150,000. I remember Wade MacLauchlan standing in this House and being very particular about the goal of getting to 150,000 by the 150th anniversary of this country. We've blown by that by far.

Unless we do this in a thoughtful way, we're going to end up with problems. I'm not suggesting that the issue with the blue books is all problematic, but the fact that we

cannot plan accurately is definitely problematic.

Where it becomes undoubtedly and inarguably problematic is in areas like the provision of health care services for all Islanders; in areas like ensuring that housing is available, accessible, and affordable for all Islanders; that child care is available and accessible and affordable for all Islanders; that the farmland that we treasure here and is such a part of our provincial identity is protected. We know currently we're losing approximately 14,000 acres of farmland every year because of development, necessary development in order to build houses to house these Islanders, these new Islanders who are coming here and contributing enormously in so many ways, not just financially but culturally and in our communities in so many ways.

But we have to plan for that well and we have to develop well. When it comes to housing, with the highest growth rate of population here in the country, we have experienced at times the lowest vacancy rate when it comes to rental properties and the highest and sharpest growth in house prices across the country.

That is putting housing out of reach, whether you're renting or whether you're buying, for so many Islanders. I look at the Pages here in this House and I wonder what you think about the future prospects of being able to own a home here on Prince Edward Island.

I know my own kids, now in their twenties and thirties, it's not easy for them. They all have fairly decent jobs working full-time, but the prospect of owning a house here on PEI, or anywhere else in Canada, for that matter, is a difficult thing for them to think about.

As a government, succession planning for the next generation is a huge part of what good governing is all about. We really need to get a handle on this.

Again, I'm not suggesting this is easy. Governing is never easy. But when you make it even more difficult for yourselves than it need be by not having a handle on a population growth strategy, that's not smart governance. It must be keeping some of you

up at night, I would imagine, trying to figure out how to deal with this.

[3:30 p.m.]

It also has impacts in unexpected areas. I was at a very large public meeting a few weeks ago at Birchwood School where the chief of the city police here, Brad MacConnell, gave a presentation on the policing challenges surrounding the Community Outreach Centre. I know we've talked about that a lot in the last couple of days. But one of the graphics that he put up has stuck with me and it was the number of police per capita. PEI has the lowest number of police per capita of any province. That's one of the things that, when I think about and talk about the impacts of population growth that we have seen, that's not something that springs to mind. But of course, it makes absolute sense.

If we have the highest growing population and we're not investing in things like police services... We talk a lot about health care and housing and child care and the environment, but we don't think of other consequences of the runaway population growth that we have. No doubt there are many, many, many other effects of this which make governing particularly hard.

So, I would love to see this government get a handle on the population of this province, where they think it should go, and how they think they should handle that, because unless we're doing that, we're going to be sort of carrying forward on increasingly choppy waters without a firm hand on the rudder and not able to trim the sails, and that's a pretty scary way to govern.

We really need to understand where we're going, what the impacts of an increased population are, doing what we can to predict that accurately, and then, when we know what the population is likely to be six months from now, a year from now, two years, five years, 10 years from now, really planning and investing today in all of the infrastructure that we need to support that future population, and that's certainly not what's being done now. It's fly by the seat of your pants: "We don't know what the population's going to be. We don't understand how many houses we have to build..." except we know exactly how many

houses we have to build. We have to build 2,000 units plus every year, and we're not even close to that.

So, even the figures that we do know that we have to achieve, we're not even close to it. The conundrum, of course, in part, is that we need more people to build those houses. So, we need skilled workers, we need to... I could go on and on about this, but I think I've made my point, and my point is that this government does not have a handle on population growth, what it is, what it means to this province, what they have to invest in in order to make sure that the quality of life for all Islanders who live here today and all the new Islanders that we will welcome over the next few years is maintained and enhanced.

The only way of getting a hold of that, of getting that under control and understanding it, is to have a fully fleshed out and a properly understood population growth strategy. We've been promised this for a very long time. For at least six months, we've been told that the finishing touches are being put on it. I would rather see a slightly rough document so that we can have an idea of what government is planning, rather than waiting for a fully polished document.

So, come on, government. Give us something to look at so that we have a sense of the direction that this province is going in, because population growth affects every single aspect of our lives and every single portfolio of government.

I look forward to hearing government members and others speak to this motion, and to the debate that ensues, and to the future of this Island that we hopefully will enjoy.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for bringing this important motion forward and for seconding it.

This is incredibly important, and I'm going to speak from a number of different views and angles on this because it is important.

The first one is a lack of strategy and action plan. We sat in the standing committee and we were excited about having a briefing on the action plan, and having it maybe tabled before our guest came in and we could have a conversation. When the guest came in from your department, Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, slowly but surely, the meeting started to go on and our expectations – and I think anybody in that meeting – started to maybe diminish a little bit because we realized we weren't going to get what we were supposed to get.

[3:35 p.m.]

We realized that it slowly started to change from an action plan to a strategy, and then all of a sudden, we realized that it's only going to be a framework. Everybody was there. It's on record; now we're going to get a framework.

It makes zero sense to frame this issue right now when we're in a crisis. It makes zero sense to move backwards and diminish expectations and call it a framework, because a framework just says: Here is the situation. Here's the problem.

We know what the problem is. It was outlined successfully. This motion was on May 12th, 2023. A lot has changed since this, and I've re-read it, and our society has changed. If we're talking about 180,000 people, we don't need a framework, we need action items. We need you to work together. We need directives to the Minister of Housing which – those questions were asked. Are they involved in this? The Minister of Housing was supposed to – I asked for his housing plan to be released on August 31st. I think I made a motion for that, and I don't think it's –

Hon. R. Lantz: Because you asked (Indistinct)

G. McNeilly: It's good that you mention that, that just because I asked, I didn't get it. But that's my job, to push you. That's my job, to make sure that you understand the importance of this over here. And we don't have it, and same thing. Similar thing.

In committee, we don't have a housing action plan. We have a housing crisis, but no plan, no strategy, and we don't even have a

framework. And then, again, I'm glad that you mentioned something because in there, as I recall from my memories of the standing committees, I remember, I think the CEO of Housing Corp said: I don't want to overblow your expectations. It's probably only going to be a short, small document and I don't think it's going to really be necessarily what you're looking for.

That's two. That's housing action plan, and we don't have a population growth plan.

So, this is where we are with things. I'll add to the list of issues that we have because we don't have a population plan. Long-term care beds; our hospitals our full, our long-term care facilities are full, and you know what? They're not even operating at full capacity. They're not there.

Our population's growing. Not only that, this government has known that our senior population is growing at an even greater rate. So, we need to not only prepare – we're at 94 percent of capacity. They're shutting down our emergency rooms. They're in level 3. Look it up. Do you know what level 3 means? Do you know what starts to happen? They start to look for beds. They start to look for emergency beds across the province because the hospital can't take them. Population plan.

Seniors – we've talked about this for four years. The Minister of Seniors over there – I asked her – only has one employee working for seniors. Now maybe there's a couple –

Hon. B. Ramsay: (Indistinct)

G. McNeilly: That's what you said in the spring session, or a few different employees over there. Not enough, because we need a strategy for seniors as well. Maybe that should have been in under the population plan that wasn't there.

Do you want me to keep – I can keep going. It's those types of things: emergency room, child care, education. Population growth is there.

And I'm going to tell you this next thing: the lack of vision creates division. The lack of vision and planning creates division within our society, and we're seeing it now. What's happening? What's happened is the division

within our communities. There's a division because you didn't plan and there's no population plan. I'm going to lay it out clearly for you: that creates blame.

When you create blame when you're talking about population – in one respect, you're trying to invite people into our province because we need them to work, and in the next respect, those people are starting to get discriminated against. They're starting to get discriminated against, not by you, not by the government, but that's what happens because there's no vision, there's no plan, and we're creating divisions within our community.

I'm talking about different cultures. Our population strategy to grow the population, that is amongst a diverse community. We're trying to get diversity in here so that we can work and keep our growing population doing well. And when those people come in, we see that it's difficult for them. Even in this motion, if you look at it, under the first operating clause, "Therefore be it resolved the Legislative Assembly express its condemnation of anti-immigrant sentiment."

[3:40 p.m.]

Right in the motion. That's what it says in here. So, you're asking, what's he talking about? We don't have a vision. You're not there. That's creating a division in society and that is coming. If you don't see it and if you don't hear it, where are our problems being laid on? And you all know, talking to people, what people are saying. I can say it because my family came here as somebody who got welcomed into this country and fought against these things. This is coming, and there's not enough protections here because we don't have a vision of Prince Edward Island and where it's going.

I'm telling you this. It's happening in the City of Charlottetown. There's no plan, there's no vision, and it created division. And here we are.

I'm talking about this because it's very important. You're talking about things that we need to do, and we're like: Oh, this might not be here. You're so worried about the small things; we're worried about the big things. These are important issues. We need to keep people in Prince Edward Island, we

need to grow our population controllably, and we need to make sure we value the people who are here, regardless of who they are, where they come from, the colour of their skin, or anything else, because we're welcoming.

This was written back in May. You talk about anti-sentiments and condemnations with what's happening in the world today, and I understand that's very important, but we need something else in this motion because time does pass, and we need to value and respect the people who are helping people in an individual level, the people in our communities who reach out and say: You are welcome. You are welcome in Morell. You're welcome in Charlottetown. You belong to our community. Come over for supper.

The kids – and we talked about the Pages – they do that naturally, and we've got to listen to how they welcome people into their circles regardless of the colour of their skin or where they come from. You do that. We need to watch you a little bit more. We need to pay attention to how the kids are solving some of these issues, because around the kitchen table, we're a little bit slower. We're a little bit slower to do that. Thank you for being the leaders, and all the kids out there, showing us how to do that.

But we need to respect, and I want to just bring an amendment to this motion to value the people of Prince Edward Island who do that; the person who helped a Nigerian student, bought them boots, bought them a coat. They didn't have any money. They were there. They took them over for supper. We brought them in because we want them to go to the University of Prince Edward Island, but once they're here, we forget them. Not all Islanders do. They're there for people, and they're there to help people. We have to take a page out of our children and the people who are helping them in our community, and that's how we build a more inclusive society.

That operative clause there, "Therefore be it resolved the Legislative Assembly express its condemnation of anti-immigrant sentiment," if we want to be inclusive, we have to acknowledge the good work of Islanders to reach out – doesn't matter the colour of your skin – to reach out and help

people because it's not the individual's fault that they don't have a plan and they don't have a vision, and we will not be creating division in our province.

I move the following amendment to go along with that amendment to this motion, if I can. I have copies, too. Can I read it out now, Madam Speaker?

Speaker: Yes. Hon. member, do you want to hand the copies to the Pages and everyone can get a copy before you start reading it?

G. McNeilly: Sure.

Speaker: Hon. member, if you'd like to continue.

G. McNeilly: Sure.

Add the following operative clause after the first operative clause:

Therefore be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly express its faith in the willingness of the vast majority of Islanders to be welcoming.

Speaker: Would anyone like to speak to the amendment?

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

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

[3:45 p.m.]

I welcome the comments of the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, and also this amendment, which I consider to be a friendly amendment to the motion. I absolutely agree, I think the vast majority of Islanders are welcoming and open. I don't like to use the word "tolerance" because it sounds as if you're sort of putting up with something, but it's much more than that. It's more than tolerance; it's an understanding, it's a welcoming, it's an upholding, it's an embracing of the new Islanders who are coming here, regardless of where they come from.

I welcome this amendment. I think it's important that – one thing that I don't think either the Leader of the Third Party or

myself said during debate on the original motion is that very often, it's the newcomers to this Island who suffer most when it comes to access to housing and things like health care and child care. In order to make sure that these people are not only welcomed in the emotional sense, but that the new Islanders are given all of the opportunities to flourish here that they deserve, that we make sure that all of these services that I talked about in my original remarks are there for everybody.

So, I welcome this amendment. I would absolutely support it because not only do we need to welcome these folks here – and I believe most Islanders do that – but it's critical that we make investments in these services because often it's the newcomers to our community who are the most at risk of suffering from a lack of services.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Is there anyone else who would like to speak to the amendment?

Shall the amendment carry? Carried.

Hon. member, would you like to continue?

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Assembly for doing this because it's –

Speaker: Sorry, hon. member. I guess you are finished.

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

Hon. J. Redmond: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, member, for bringing forward this motion.

As Minister of Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to how our Island continues to be among the fastest growing regions of our country. There's no denying that as our population grows, so will the demands on programs, services, and infrastructure. People will need health care. Their children will go to schools. They will all need a place to call home, parks to play in, a reliable road and transit system to take them where they need to go, and of course, the sense of opportunity, personally and

professionally, as they put down roots in our province.

That's precisely what we're thinking about and that's precisely what we'll be addressing in the upcoming population framework.

With the help of an expert economic firm, staff organized a rigorous public engagement tour across the province last year to hear the perspectives of local governments, community organizations, sector and industry associations, and of course, our Island residents. We listened to them, heard their concerns, made note of the questions and ideas they had, and it's all being included in the framework.

What we heard across all these sessions share many common themes, which form the basis of how we will tackle population growth together.

The five key themes we heard include: expand critical infrastructure and public services and supports to meet the demands of a growing population; build and retain PEI's talent pool and workforce; support community and environmental sustainability; enhance community connectedness and a sense of belonging; and ensure there is a robust approach to planning, policy coordination, and reporting.

As I said, we all want sustainable growth with appropriate services and infrastructure, where we can keep and build Island talent from tip to tip in such a way that they will see PEI as a place to live, learn, and prosper.

Those are the key themes of the upcoming framework, and under each theme there will be initiatives led by the different provincial departments in collaboration with other internal and external partners.

We know that the work ahead needs to be well informed by data. As part of the development of the framework, we have also developed a new population planning tool that can consolidate data from different areas to help inform a more coordinated approach in our provincial planning, policies, and investments. Our government as a whole is already tackling this large body of work, and with the new framework and tool, we will more coordinated than ever.

[3:50 p.m.]

We can't forget that all this talk about population growth also is about opportunity. More people calling PEI home means more opportunities for us to reach our fullest potential. We are at a pivotal time, as the member suggests in his motion, where we have to get the groundwork done and done right.

There's no question that more people mean we need more infrastructure, but it's those very same people who can help us build more housing, provide health care, take care of our little ones, and so much more. These are opportunities for our province to grow socially, economically, and culturally.

The people moving to Prince Edward Island are part of the solution. Let's help create an environment where they can build connections to their new home and nurture a strong sense of belonging. Let's connect them to our workforce and support them and push our province forward economically with innovation. Let's modernize our social services to meet our current and future needs and at the same time, enrich the cultural fabric of our province.

For us to keep moving forward, we will need to continue to work together. We will need to track our progress and not be afraid to adjust when and where we need to. There's so much more to gain here, and I have every belief that, overall, we will succeed. It will be hard, and it won't be perfect, but by working together, being flexible and responsive to the evolving needs of our residents, we will come out on top and everyone will benefit from a growing population.

I do support much of what this motion means for our province and I hope all members of this House will be supportive of our renewed, coordinated approach to meet the needs of our growing population. It's not just about having all hands on deck for us in this Chamber, but it's all of government, all levels of government, industry, and community. It's an all-of-PEI approach, and I'm confident we'll arise to this occasion. That's just who we are.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Is there anyone else who would like to speak to the motion?

Hon. member, would you like to adjourn debate?

K. Bernard: Alright. There was a lot there that – I mean, one thing. I would have loved to have heard one thing in that, and that is the “when”; when that is coming.

I'm hearing the key themes of the framework and they sound really great, but actually, when I hear what you were saying, I got a little more scared because, is this going to be the “how”? The things you said were lovely and rosy and we need to work together and we need to enhance our social services. We know all of those things now, so I really hope this framework is going to be the “how” in your plan to actually do those things because nothing else really matters.

All of those nice ways of talking about this is really great and that's the ultimate goal, but if we don't have the “how”, we're never going to get there. So, I have a hard time hearing about the fact that this is an opportunity. It is an opportunity, 100 percent, but if we don't see some movement and we don't see action, it's hard to think of what people are experiencing right now as an opportunity.

I just don't feel urgency from this government and I'm not convinced yet that this government is up for the challenge.

People coming here being part of the solution? Absolutely, but if they don't have a place to live, how can they be part of the solution? If we can't get them here and keep them healthy and keep them safe, then we haven't done our job. Government hasn't done their job.

I appreciate what the minister said. It's hard and it's not perfect. Absolutely, you're right.

Another thing, thinking back, connecting this to a land use plan, connecting this to education, EAL teachers; we're just not keeping up as it is right now. I want to imagine that government will get there. It's hard to imagine that right now when we see what people are going through, just given those few things that I had just mentioned.

[3:55 p.m.]

I agree with what the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty said: Lack of vision creates division. Let's add this to the very long list of divisions that are not being solved by this government.

With that, I will adjourn debate and call the question.

Standing vote, please.

Speaker: Hon. members, a recorded division has been requested.

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, you may ring the bell.

[The bells were rung]

R. Henderson: Opposition members are ready for the vote, Madam Speaker.

P. Bevan-Baker: Madam Speaker, the third party is ready for the vote.

Z. Bell: Government is ready for the vote. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

All those in favour of the motion, please stand.

Clerk: Hon. Minister of Education and Early Years
 Hon. Minister of Finance
 Hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General
 Member from Kensington-Malpeque
 Hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action
 Hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure
 Member from Charlottetown-Winsloe
 Hon. Minister of Fisheries, Tourism, Sport and Culture
 Hon. Minister of Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population
 Hon. Minister of Social Development and Seniors
 Hon. Minister of Economic Development, Innovation and Trade
 Hon. Minister of Health and Wellness
 Leader of the Third Party
 Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty

Hon. Leader of the Opposition
 Member from Summerside-Wilmot
 Member from Rustico-Emerald
 Member from Souris-Elmira
 Member from New Haven-Rocky Point
 Member from O'Leary-Inverness
 Member from Borden-Kinkora
 Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke
 Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere
 Member from Morell-Donagh

Speaker: Hon. member, your motion has passed, and it is unanimous.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I now ask that Motion 15 be called.

Clerk: Motion No. 15: Eliminating food insecurity.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party moves, seconded by the hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point, the following motion:

WHEREAS the Poverty Elimination Strategy Act outlines targets for the reduction and elimination of food insecurity on PEI;

AND WHEREAS the Chief Public Health Office's 2021 report notes that "food insecurity increases the risk of dietary deficiencies, chronic diseases, stress, and feelings of uncertainty," and that "children in these households are more likely to have educational, behavioural, and emotional difficulties than children in food-secure households";

AND WHEREAS a recent report by PROOF Canada found that PEI led the country in food insecurity in 2022, and that 35.1% of Island children live in food-insecure households;

AND WHEREAS the provincial government has policy levers available to reduce the prevalence of household food insecurity on PEI, including increasing the minimum wage, increasing social assistance

benefits, and lowering taxes for financially vulnerable Islanders;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Legislative Assembly reaffirm its commitment to the food insecurity reduction and elimination targets in the Poverty Elimination Strategy Act;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Legislative Assembly urge government to make better use of the tools available to it to reduce food security, including through the improved use of minimum wage increases, social assistance benefits, and targeted tax measures.

[4:00 p.m.]

Speaker: Thank you.

The Clerk has taken up all your time, hon. member, so we're going to move on.

Government Motions

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 17th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 17, *Mental Health Act*, Bill No. 28, 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 Honourable Minister of Finance, that the said bill be now read a second time.

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

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

I would like to rise to discuss the principle of this bill, briefly.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Go ahead.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks.

This is the first full review of PEI's *Mental Health Act* in almost three decades, 30 years. Our office received a copy of this legislation just last Thursday. Yesterday was the first time that the public was given an opportunity to see the draft. Although some consultation was conducted by the Department of Health and Wellness, a draft of the act, as far as I am aware, was not provided to any of the stakeholders with which a consultation was done.

The *Mental Health Act* is a unique piece of legislation in that it's the only piece of legislation that can actually remove a person's right to freedoms without them actually having committed a wrongdoing. Therefore, it's absolutely critical that the rights of individuals are upheld when we bring forward this piece of legislation. It's essential that the views of all Islanders are heard and incorporated into this statute.

As I said, we had a briefing on the bill on Monday, and when we began asking questions during that briefing about who the department had consulted with, the minister would not provide us with that list. That has never happened to me in all of the years I've been in this House. We had a bill debated this afternoon, introduced and read for a second time, and the first question from the government's side was: Who have you consulted with? And the mover of the bill provided that information.

That was a new experience for me, and it was the first red flag that... Again, I don't know quite why there was the withholding of that list, but it struck me as odd.

So, we began reaching out to individuals and to groups, stakeholders, that we imagined would have a great interest in this piece of legislation, who would be intimately affected by the *Mental Health Act*, or folks who might represent individuals who may be affected by any changes that we make to the act.

We've reached out to a fairly large number; I would say close to a dozen. While we

haven't heard back from everybody – we're working on a pretty close timeline here, as you can imagine, just having received the bill ourselves a couple of days ago – so far it's clear that there is evidence that many of these groups who were consulted with never received the bill, and indeed, many of the folks who we imagined would have been consulted with were not reached out to at all.

This lack of consultation has likely contributed to the concerns that we as a caucus have with the document in its current form.

This will be the newest *Mental Health Act* in Canada. We should be setting a gold standard for what we're doing here. Many other provinces have updated their mental health acts in the recent years, and they've done really great work in evaluating their previous statutes and bringing forward really groundbreaking recommendations. Some of those we will find in this act, but many we will not.

We have an opportunity to leapfrog to the front of the pack, if I can put it that way, by incorporating the best recommendations from other jurisdictions, and when we get to the debate of this bill – presumably will happen at some point – I would love to see us incorporating more of those recommendations from jurisdictions that have done the work, consulted properly, gone out to stakeholders with a real willingness to listen to them and incorporate their concerns.

[4:05 p.m.]

A fundamental piece that we don't see in this act, and I wish that we did, is a rights-based approach, as we see in New Brunswick and Newfoundland, for example. Of course, like all pieces of legislation, it's a balancing act. We need to balance the need to get individuals treatment, absolutely, but we also have to ensure that their fundamental rights are respected and maintained. In our estimation, this act does not create the best balance that we could, here.

We've been calling for a new and improved *Mental Health Act* for years. I could point you to motions that we brought forward in almost every sitting of this Legislature,

including the current one. We wanted a new and improved act. We will not settle for just a new act. We may not get another opportunity to look at the *Mental Health Act* again – a unique piece of legislation in every jurisdiction – for decades. Again, let's do this right now.

With growing mental health needs in Prince Edward Island, we need to give this critical piece of legislation the time and the attention it deserves. Unfortunately, it appears that the Minister of Health has not yet done that.

I would love to see this bill sent not to Committee of the Whole, as we typically debate bills, but sent to a standing committee where we will have more open and transparent conversation with the stakeholders directly, with a draft of the legislation in front of us about how we can actually improve the lives of Islanders who are dealing with severe mental health crises and the lives of their families and friends who are inevitably affected.

It also will allow us to speak to the service providers to ensure that we pass a framework that allows them to provide the treatment that they would like to do whilst respecting the rights of individuals.

We should be inviting groups like BIPOC USHR, like PEERS Alliance, like the Community Legal Information of Prince Edward Island. These folks have not ever seen a draft of this bill. We, as legislators, are being asked to pass a bill which would intimately impact their day-to-day operations.

We should be inviting services that play a role in the implementation of the *Mental Health Act*, like psychologists and counsellors, the mobile mental health units, and the police and the RCMP. Some police services here on the Island were not even aware that the *Mental Health Act* was coming forward. That should give us pause.

Last, but certainly not least, we should be inviting those with lived experience with the act to tell us their experience, their wants, and their needs for an improved act.

For all these reasons, I stand here this afternoon to debate the principle of this bill

and ask this Legislature that rather than proceed to Committee of the Whole, as we typically do with bills at second reading, that this bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Health and Social Development.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

B. Trivers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I wanted to rise and comment as well on this bill and on the words of the Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

When I was Minister of Social Development – it was “and Housing” back then – one of the most frustrating things to me was when we had supports available to people, but they didn’t want to take them. They weren’t ready to take them; they couldn’t take them. There’s a whole variety of reasons for that. A lot of it had to do with, frankly, their state of mind, whether that be a mental illness or being under the influence or an addiction; using, choosing to use.

The experts on the street, people like PEERS Alliance or people who’ve done a lot of work in (Indistinct) – like Mike Redmond, I have spoken with him – they’re saying you just have to build a personal relationship and keep working with people until they’re ready to accept the supports. But I definitely saw people with such severe mental illness that really, it was a harm to themselves or to others in the way they were living. It doesn’t take much to walk the streets of Charlottetown to see that, frankly.

When I first saw the *Mental Health Act*, I was like, this is great because we’re going to make a step forward to finding a better balance between the rights of the individual and reducing harm to them and to society.

[4:10 p.m.]

I think we’re moving in the right direction with this legislation. I think it’s extremely important to respect the rights of the individual, but I think it’s also extremely important to do what we can as a society to protect individuals from harm and also

protect our communities from harm. We have to find that balance.

I have various opinions on whether this bill goes far enough in terms of finding that balance, but I tend to agree with the comments from the member that we should have some more frank discussions on this.

We’ve heard in the last couple of days many, many comments about the outreach centre and whether it’s been successful or not. It was opened in an attempt to help people, to reduce harm, to strive, to move forward. Have we made enough movement forward? You could argue no, and I think the Minister of Housing, Land and Communities has said, we need to make vast improvements.

We have to reexamine our model, and I would agree. When we opened it up, we had high hopes. We thought that the attendance might be in the neighbourhood of 40 or 50 people. I believe one of the stats I heard was 270-plus people in one month. There’s obviously a huge need out there.

The Leader of the Third Party had mentioned that we need to improve the supports we can actually offer people. We’ve got these people there, they need help, they want help, but how do we give them that help? When it comes to the *Mental Health Act*, I think this is a huge opportunity to find that line where we can say: “You need help.”

I wanted to say that I have constituents with children with lifetime mental health issues. They may even work with their parents and their parents can see when they start to go off the rails. They know they’re going off the rails, but they have to respect the human rights and the choice of their child – in this case, grown adults – to choose not to take their medication, to choose not to go to work, to choose to check themselves out of rehab.

These are the lines that the *Mental Health Act* defines, and these are the things we need to really seriously discuss because I think if we’re going to help people with mental health problems, and in many, many cases related to addictions, that’s an extremely important line that we have to find. Otherwise, it’s going to simply take too

much time and resources to help the people, or they may never get the help they need.

It's a fine line, don't get me wrong. It should not be taken lightly when you take away the rights of an individual. The Charter or Rights and Freedoms is an extremely important document and Charter that we have.

I just wanted to stand up and I wanted to say that because I believe this is an extremely important act and I'm not sure we have had the full discussion in that context. I think it is important to do that. Thank you for raising those concerns.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Is there anyone else who would like to debate this bill at second reading?

Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 28, *Mental Health Act*, read a second time.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Sorry, Speaker. I just would like some clarification on the process and what exactly we just voted for there. I was a little unclear.

Speaker: You had the opportunity, member, to debate it at second reading. That has happened. Now we carry forward with the bill.

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

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

[4:15 p.m.]

[S. MacEwen in the chair]

Chair: The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled the *Mental Health Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read...

Sorry, I'll ask the promoter of the bill, would you like to make a motion to bring a stranger to the floor?

Hon. M. McLane: I would.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Thank you for coming, Nichola. Could you introduce yourself and your title for Hansard?

Nichola Hewitt: Nichola Hewitt, solicitor and legislative specialist with the Department of Health and Wellness.

Chair: Thank you.

Members, this is a large bill. Would you like to go section by section, part by part, clause by clause?

Section by section?

P. Bevan-Baker: Section by section is good, Chair.

Chair: Thank you, members.

Promoter, would you like to start with a general statement?

Hon. M. McLane: Yeah, I would. First of all, obviously this bill will replace the existing *Mental Health Act*. It updates existing definitions and adds new definitions. It provides that substantial physical or mental deterioration is an alternate to harm for involuntary admission criteria. It includes CTOs, a viable treatment tool used in many provinces used to break the cycle of admission, improvement, decompensation, and readmission for patients who meet certain criteria, and it repeals redundant data provisions.

In response to the members' debate before we started today, I would like to provide a list of the identified stakeholders that we reached out to.

They include Health PEI, Abegweit Health, Community Legal Information, the John Howard Society, PEERS Alliance, Holland College, RCMP, Charlottetown Police, Community Mental Health Association, City of Summerside, Law Society of Prince Edward Island, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the College of Registered Nurses and Midwives, the Mental Health Review Board, Medical Society of Prince Edward Island, BIPOC USHR, and PEI Transgender Network.

Also please note that the mental health was posted online on August 30th, 2022 and was there for six weeks to allow community stakeholder responses. Just to clarify all that.

Chair: Thank you, minister.

Alright, members, section 1: Definitions.

Do we have any questions?

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

G. McNeilly: In the definitions, “‘community treatment’ means treatment or care and supervision outside of a psychiatric facility.” That seems broad. Could you talk a little bit more about that definition?

Nichola Hewitt: It’s what it says it is. I’ve always said, this is a really poor analogy, but it’s the only one I could come up with. A community treatment order would be kind of like parole. So, a psychiatrist – and again, this is a clinical determination – a psychiatrist has determined that somebody has reached a point in their care journey where they’re stable, and that they would benefit from treatment outside of a psychiatric unit.

[4:20 p.m.]

They would allow them to move into the community, with a community treatment plan in place, and also a community treatment order. The order would require compliance with the community treatment plan. There are wraparound services in the community. There would be counselling services. There are probably medical services. There’d be family supports. It’s a fairly robust process. They’re setting them up for success, is what they’re doing.

G. McNeilly: Yeah, I ask that because I know when we talk about wraparound services and we’re in a crisis to find qualified people, what’s there that we can guarantee equitable access throughout the *Mental Health Act* if they’re in rural PEI or if they cannot get the services that they can in their communities?

Nichola Hewitt: The only thing I can say to that is the order would require community treatment and there is a provision in here that if the community treatment is no longer available, then the order would, I think – just bear with me, let me get you the right terminology.

Yeah, so the order would be revoked if the community treatment the person requires no longer exists in the community or is no longer available or provided to the person.

Legislation can’t guarantee access, right?

G. McNeilly: Yeah, I understand that.

Then I guess we’ll get to that.

Nichola Hewitt: Sorry?

G. McNeilly: We’ll get to that after, as the act goes along.

I found it, as I’m looking at this... The first thing I went to look for is basically the definition of peace officer in here, and I just didn’t see it within the definitions.

Nichola Hewitt: No, you wouldn’t.

G. McNeilly: Yeah.

Nichola Hewitt: You have to go to the *Interpretation Act*. When you have a term that’s used frequently throughout legislation, it’s usually defined in the *Interpretation Act*. That’s where it is.

G. McNeilly: Yeah, and that’s a hard thing because this act is – I understand there’s nothing that you can do, but somebody who’s reading this act can’t – peace officer comes (Indistinct), can you tell me what that *Interpretation Act* says about a peace officer?

Nichola Hewitt: I can. It’s (1) a mayor, sheriff, or sheriff’s officer, (2) a warden,

correctional officer, or somebody of that type, (3) police officer, security police officer, or such that's defined in the *Police Act*. It may further you on to the *Police Act*. This definition is found in the schedule of the *Interpretation Act* at clause (oo).

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, one more and then I can put you back on the list.

G. McNeilly: And here lies the problem, is that for the communities that I represent, that definition provokes a lot of fear. When you're talking about the marginalized communities, when you're talking about BIPOC USHR, Black Cultural Society, IRSA people. After the word "mayor," it gets a little bit difficult. We've had that situation here with a marginalized member of the community. You know where I'm going with this question.

Nichola Hewitt: Yeah, I did do a jurisdictional scan on this very issue. Every jurisdiction, without fail, refers to either a police officer or a peace officer.

G. McNeilly: Like we just talked about before, we've got an act to open up where we could have actually looked at that and made it a little bit more, I don't know, inclusive and showed the rest of the country how to approach that. What do you say to that?

Nichola Hewitt: Well, I think you need to be careful, again, because this is rights-based legislation and it's very procedural. There will not be a lot of individuals who would be well versed in an individual's charter rights. I think it's important for that reason.

I will also point out if you look in clause 4(2), we talk about a peace officer or other person to apprehend the person named or described, so it may not be a peace officer.

G. McNeilly: I had that underlined.

Nichola Hewitt: There you go. We tried, right?

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

[4:25 p.m.]

P. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

We're looking at the definitions section here. I realize this is not included in the definition, but I think it's really critical for us to establish this: what we mean when we say we consulted with a group.

This is a general question, Chair, and I hope at this stage of the discussion, given how important it is, that we could establish exactly what we mean when we say we consulted.

Can I ask the minister what his definition of consultation is?

Hon. M. McLane: I have confidence in the staff that they – again, this has been a work in progress for how long, Nichola?

Nichola Hewitt: About 20 months now.

Hon. M. McLane: Twenty months?

Nichola Hewitt: Yeah.

Hon. M. McLane: Again, the long list, and again, apologize that it didn't come out in the briefing. It might have helped the situation, but a draft was presented to them and they would – again, back to consultation – object, affirm, or provide comment.

P. Bevan-Baker: For me, consultation has to be a dialogue. It has to be interaction with another individual or another entity or group. You mentioned that a long list of groups there. Can you tell me how many of them responded to your consultation?

Nichola Hewitt: I guess the first comment I would say is consultation would be subjective. Everybody's going to view consultation differently. In fact, there's a lot of court cases on it.

I will also hasten to add that besides these formal consultations, on an ongoing basis, there are always consultations, particularly at the deputy minister level, with groups that have come in and spoken to her, providing feedback and dialogue on mental health.

We initially went out the end of August 2022 on this to the list of parties we identified. Out of that list, we had feedback from two of those individuals. In addition,

we had feedback from individuals who had accessed the consultation paper and the draft legislation on – yeah, on the website.

When this was issued, it was carried in the news. I remember hearing it in the news that it had been released for consultations because we'd had reach-outs from the press on that. That's back in August 2022. There was a news release issued, and then the information was posted to our website.

The other thing I hasten to add is this legislation is all about process. It's not about services that are provided. I think a lot of people kind of got that, that it was very much a process-oriented piece and not the suite of services we operate. I think that's a really important distinction to make.

P. Bevan-Baker: The list that the minister read through at the very beginning of this discussion contained at least two groups that we've spoken to in the last 24 hours who tell us, our legislative office, that they were not consulted with.

I'm sitting and I have not an opportunity – maybe this is just a difference in definition, but for example, let's take the Community Legal Information. Could you talk through what exactly your consultation with them was?

Hon. M. McLane: Again, we do have record of the email reach-outs to all those organizations; back to your inquiries during the briefing that we have emails that we have reached out to all those organizations asking for feedback.

P. Bevan-Baker: Right. I think Nichola mentioned you had feedback from two individuals. Is that two –

Nichola Hewitt: On the list, yeah. That would have been – one was Health PEI, and the other one was...

Hon. M. McLane: Dante Bazard.

Nichola Hewitt: ...Dante Bazard.

Hon. M. McLane: I missed him on my list.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Nichola Hewitt: I think his term is the anti-racism advisor. He certainly provided feedback and it's sitting here in the draft in front of you.

[4:30 p.m.]

P. Bevan-Baker: Those are two government entities or individuals. Can I infer from that that all of the others did not respond?

Nichola Hewitt: The email that went out said: "This is what we're doing. Here's where you can find these documents. Please provide your feedback or comments." And my email address was given. I swear on a stack of Bibles, I got eight pieces of feedback, and that was it.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Right. So, our caucus has brought forward many pieces of legislation over the last little while, and it's become the sort of starting point for all discussions and opportunities, if I can put it that way, to diminish the bill in front of us by suggesting that it has not been consulted sufficiently. I'm hearing here that only two individuals actually responded to the process over a period of 20 months.

I'm deeply concerned that, again, at least two of the groups that you mentioned there felt that they were not consulted with. Again, we're going to have to follow up on this with them, clearly; such an important piece of legislation. I realize that it was up on the website for a very long time, and there were news stories about that, and I absolutely saw that. That's when I first got engaged with it. I have to tell you, I don't ever remember seeing a draft of the legislation on that site. I stand to be corrected, but I never saw one.

Nichola Hewitt: We have evidence of that, as well. Absolutely. I'll tell you how I knew for sure, because the six individuals that reached out to us that weren't on that list, that was where they accessed it because otherwise they wouldn't have known what was on it, what it contained.

P. Bevan-Baker: Just to be absolutely clear, Nichola, we're talking about a draft of the

legislation, not the consultation document that was...

Nichola Hewitt: Absolutely. There was a consultation paper and then there was the consultation draft of the act.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Nichola Hewitt: Yeah, absolutely. To be honest, in the preamble in the consultation paper, we did say that the main changes were the expansion of the involuntary admission criteria and the inclusion of community treatment orders. Those were the two most significant changes from what we currently have to the new piece of legislation.

Whether people looked at that and said, "Gee, we're fine with that," I don't know. I just don't know.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay. Again, this has all happened rather quickly – not the process of you going out to the public, although I would absolutely question that sending an email is an appropriate definition of consultation, particularly for something as important as this. Just for me, that's not adequate.

We have heard from at least two of the groups that were mentioned that they actually now have a voice, concerns, and they want to come forward. Do they have an opportunity to do so?

Hon. M. McLane: I think there is, again – I wouldn't use the word sense of urgency, but I think we've worked on this document for a long time, and I think the CTO, we've added an important part, I think, for supporting the public going forward. I don't know what's changed over 20 months, why they would be concerned now, but I guess Nichola can speak to that.

Chair: One more, the hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Sure. I'm going to repeat that for clarity.

I know that people's lives are busy. folks in these organizations all have several balls in the air all the time. I would understand that

this was perhaps missed, particularly if the email was sent out some time ago.

I just want to clarify, minister. You're saying there is no opportunity now for any of these groups to have input in the discussion that we're having today.

Hon. M. McLane: Well, it's on the floor of the House, obviously, for consideration, so I think we're well along the legislative trail to move this bill forward.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

[4:35 p.m.]

So, we're telling you that there are very important, reputable organizations who feel as though they did not have a voice in this process. They recognize the urgency of this. They recognize the severity of this.

Knowing that, if I were in your seat, minister, I would be advocating to send this to committee so that we ensured – because I would also like to know how many responses we got from advocates or individuals who were consumers of mental health services in Prince Edward Island. Did we get any feedback from them?

Hon. M. McLane: Yes, we did.

K. Bernard: You said you had six people reach out to you, two of which – I'm confused if there were six or eight – but two of which would have been government organizations. So, you're telling me that there are people with lived experience who reached out and provided feedback.

Nichola Hewitt: Yes.

K. Bernard: We have had contact with people who have been quite active in their advocacy work for mental health and addictions in this province and they have concerns and want their voices heard.

I'm finding it very hard to believe that we have a minister sitting in a chair who's saying we're done now.

I disagree. I feel like this consultation process was not good enough considering

how many... I believe that all those emails were sent out. I also know that these organizations are heavily burdened right now. They are working at capacity. It would have been a much easier process for them to come in and have a conversation rather than write it all out.

I just find it very concerning, as should Islanders, that you would be okay just pushing this through, recognizing there are people who have grave concerns with this piece of legislation.

Hon. M. McLane: I guess from my perspective as minister, I take your word for it that they have some concerns, but I have not received any concerns.

As minister, with regards to advocates, for a wholesome discussion, there would be an opportunity at a standing committee over the summer to bring some of those people in and to maybe have a more fulsome discussion.

Again, consultation is subjective. The department has done the normal procedures in order to advise the public of a legislation change and to gather their feedback. It would appear that you didn't feel it was appropriate enough, but I don't know how we undo that. Do we continue to ask again and again if we don't get feedback on certain legislation?

Nichola Hewitt: I missed what you said there. Did you say they had opportunity to come in over the summer to standing committee?

Hon. M. McLane: No, I said it could have been an opportunity for a more fulsome discussion if you deemed it so and you were hearing from advocates that wanted additional consultations. I just suggested it. It was a simple suggestion.

K. Bernard: We didn't even know that this *Mental Health Act* was coming, so I find it very insulting that you would place this at our feet to get committee going during summer for this. I think that would have been your responsibility.

M. MacKay: You brought a motion 72 hours ago to bring this as quickly as possible. You brought the motion.

K. Bernard: Before we saw the draft.

[Interjections]

Chair: Order! Order!

The minister has the floor.

Hon. S. Myers: Now it's not good enough.

K. Bernard: No, it's not.

Hon. S. Myers: She didn't bother to follow along when it had been sitting there for two months. You could have looked at it two months ago.

Chair: Minister, do you –

[Interjections]

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West
Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Minister, before, I think you said it's been a long time since they have given the feedback. We mentioned the anti-racism manager in there. When was his feedback submitted to you? You said it's in the draft. Can you share that with us?

Nichola Hewitt: His feedback would have been September, October last year. We did extend consultations by two weeks because of Fiona. I can tell you where we put his feedback. It is in 25(2): "A person appointed to the Review Board shall have knowledge, experience or a diverse perspective that will assist the Review Board to achieve its mandate."

G. McNeilly: Perfect. That is important. I think he's doing a great job. His job is to look at legislation.

[4:40 p.m.]

But that's a new position. Was he followed up on, considering it was last year, COVID? I'm just saying that a lot of things change. A lot of things in the community changed. There was an incident that I know some of the community was involved in. So, have you followed up with that after that?

Nichola Hewitt: I believe the ADM reached out to his DM to advise that we were putting this provision in, but it wasn't me,

personally, so that would be hearsay. But that was my understanding.

G. McNeilly: Legislation is hard to read and it's very, very old. You do a great job of it, but it's hard to read for people who don't have experience with this.

For example, when you're looking at this, and I'm looking at a peace officer, your definition kind of – I've got the federal definition; it's very similar. The consultation process, is there more than just, I don't know, just putting it out there and saying, "We need your feedback"? Because this is too important.

Were you able to bring it down? I met with you and you did a great job, but our meeting was only 15 minutes. It was the best we could do, but I think the consultation process does need to be a little bit more, especially with the general public.

What's the exact process, outside of the website work and the things that were on there? Do you take that into consideration?

Nichola Hewitt: I'm not quite sure what you've asked me, here. What we always do with our legislation is reach out to who we've identified as stakeholders – I mean, we've been doing it ever since I've been in this seat – and ask what feedback they have, if any. Sometimes they'll request a meeting. If they request a meeting, we absolutely will sit down with them. Sometimes we hear nothing, and sometimes we get written feedback. It comes in all forms.

Like I say, I do know that, on an ongoing basis, our ADM of Mental Health and Addictions and our DM of the department meet with these various groups all the time. So, there's constant dialogue and interaction and feedback going both ways.

G. McNeilly: I guess we'll talk more about that. I appreciate the answers, and I know my question was – I can't even ask a question properly, let alone read this legislation. So, I mean, it's difficult.

For example, substitute decision-maker, it says here, the (y) definition; there's been a lot of talk about substitute decision-makers. I know this is making reference to the *Consent to Treatment and Health Care*

Directives Act. That's being talked about. We've talked about that in standing committee, substitute decision-maker.

Will the future of that piece of legislation affect this, when we look at that substitute decision-maker? Can you just talk to me a little bit about that?

Nichola Hewitt: Well, there's a difference between a substitute decision-maker and a supportive decision-maker, and I wasn't aware that substitute decision-makers had been spoken about at standing committee, but I stand to be corrected.

See, we don't like to have different definitions in different pieces of legislation; a substitute decision-maker defined for the purpose of this and then a substitute decision-maker defined for the purpose of consent to treatment, and a substitute decision-maker... You know what I mean? You're going to get inconsistent definitions, which is what we don't want. So, that's why we cross-reference other legislation.

When you go to the *Consent to Treatment and Health Care Directives Act*, a substitute decision-maker is defined there as the proxy – in other words, somebody you've given authority to make; the guardian; the spouse; the son or the daughter; the parent of the person; the brother or sister; a person whom the health practitioner considers to be their trusted friend; or any other relative. So, whenever I refer to substitute decision-maker in legislation, it's always the same definition.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, thank you for coming back to the definitions. I appreciate that.

[4:45 p.m.]

G. McNeilly: Yes. Thank you very much, Chair.

So, how does that representative, when you have (v) in there, "representative", how does that alternate..."

Nichola Hewitt: That's a really good question.

G. McNeilly: Thank you. I did it. I did it. You heard it from her first. [Laughter]

Nichola Hewitt: A substitute decision-maker is with respect to treatment. The representative may... Okay, how do I explain this?

The representative is the legal representative that will make legal decisions. That could be a guardian. A substitute decision-maker is not necessarily a legal representative; they're going to make treatment decisions.

For example, let me use this. I may have my husband be my representative. He'll make decisions on my legal matters. But if my daughter was a nurse, I might want her as my substitute decision-maker to make the medical decisions, the treatment decisions. That's the distinction between the two of them.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, one more and then I'll put you back on.

G. McNeilly: So then, for the future of the act, that can become fluent. What if the person has not made that clear and they are not in a position to make that decision? Who takes over?

Nichola Hewitt: For what?

G. McNeilly: For the purpose of their –

Nichola Hewitt: Substitute decision or for the purpose of the representative?

G. McNeilly: Well, for the first, the substitute decision-maker because that becomes the most important.

Nichola Hewitt: Okay. Then, the *Consent to Treatment and Health Care Directives Act* provides "(f) a person whom the health practitioner considers to be the patient's trusted friend with close knowledge of the wishes."

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Nichola Hewitt: Or any other relative. There's a list of them, right?

G. McNeilly: Thank you.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Chair.

I just want to clarify a couple of things. I heard some comments from a Cabinet member about the quality of the staff in my office, and I cannot sit here and accept stuff like that.

We received a copy of this piece of legislation just two days ago. We were made aware of – I'm sorry, that's not true. We received a briefing two days ago; we received a copy of this bill towards the end of last week. Since we have got that information, we have done huge amounts of work to reach out to community members more clearly than the minister has done over the last 20 months.

The original motion that the House leader on the government side referred to was drafted at a time where we had not seen the bill and we were not aware of the quality of consultation.

Now that we have seen the bill and that we understand how little consultation was actually done, we are less keen for this bill to fly through this House. I hope that we have made that case very clearly. That's because of the great work of the staff in my office. I will defend them every day.

To the definitions, Chair. But that absolutely had to be said. There's been some chat about the peace officer already, but the peace officer, should that not include members of mobile mental health units or perhaps the definition elsewhere would include that?

Nichola Hewitt: Sorry, I'm –

Hon. M. McLane: (Indistinct)

P. Bevan-Baker: Yes, I saw you. Yes. I asked whether the definition of peace officer should include members of the mobile mental health units.

Nichola Hewitt: Well, that's beyond the parameters of this legislation. The peace officer is defined in the *Interpretation Act*, not in this act. So, we can't do anything about that.

P. Bevan-Baker: So, it would not be possible to have a separate definition in this act which would include mobile mental health units specifically for the purposes of this act?

Nichola Hewitt: The problem with mobile mental health units, adding that, is it's a concept. The next government that comes along might do away with them and then all of a sudden, we've got a definition that carries no significance.

It's kind of like an employment – it's a concept, right?

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay. I don't think I have any other questions on section 1, Chair. Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

B. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I first wanted to say that I think we're moving in the right direction with this. I think it's really important that we find this balance between human rights and also helping people help themselves, from society.

[4:50 p.m.]

Along those lines, when I'm looking at the definitions, there are things like certificates of incapacity, certificates of involuntary admission, community treatment orders, community treatment plans, things like this. I'm assuming those existed under the old legislation – not being an expert in the old legislation (Indistinct) – but I'm interested in knowing how often those things were used, those devices, to help people in the past so we can compare them to the future to see if this does indeed, in my opinion, improve by allowing more people to get help that may not have been offered that help in the past.

Again, you could argue both sides. You could say you're taking away more people's rights by giving out more community treatment orders.

I'm interested in knowing, over the last – you could pick a time period: five years, 10 years, 20 years –

Hon. M. McLane: The stranger is not feeling well. Give her a quick minute. She's not feeling well.

Chair: I'm just going to call a quick recess.

Hon. M. McLane: Yeah, thank you.

[The Committee recessed from 4:51 p.m. to 4:54 p.m.]

Chair: Alright, members. Minister, do you want to put a motion forward to report progress?

Hon. M. McLane: I do.

Chair: Thank you. Members, are you okay to report progress?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Chair: Thank you.

[4:55 p.m.]

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

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

[Hon. D. Compton in the chair]

S. MacEwen: Madam Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having under consideration a bill to be intituled *Mental Health 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 Kensington-Malpeque.

M. MacKay: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, that this House adjourn until Thursday, November 9th, at 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

[The Legislature adjourned until Thursday, November 9th, 2023 at 1:00 p.m.]