



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of Prince Edward Island**

**Official Report of
Debates and Proceedings**

(Hansard)

Third Session of the 67th General Assembly

Tuesday, 12 May 2026

No. 26

The Honourable Brad Trivers, Speaker

Published by Order of the Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
67th General Assembly
Third Session

Lieutenant Governor – His Honour the Honourable Dr. Wassim Salamoun, O.P.E.I.

Speaker – Hon. Brad Trivers

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Member and Party	Constituency (District)	Other Responsibilities
Arsenault , Gilles (IND)	Évangeline-Miscouche (21)	
Bell , Hon. Zack (PC)	Charlottetown-Winsloe (10)	Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning Minister responsible for Acadian and Francophone Affairs
Bernard , Karla (G)	Charlottetown-Victoria Park (12)	Third Party Whip
Bevan-Baker , Peter (G)	New Haven-Rocky Point (17)	Third Party House Leader
Burridge , Hon. Jill (PC)	Stratford-Keppoch (6)	Minister of Finance and Affordability
Compton , Hon. Darlene (PC)	Belfast-Murray River (4)	Minister of Land and Environment
Croucher , Hon. Robin (PC)	Souris-Elmira (1)	Minister of Education and Early Years
Curran , Brendan (PC)	Georgetown-Pownal (2)	
Deagle , Hon. Cory (PC)	Montague-Kilmuir (3)	Minister of Health and Wellness
DesRoches , Tyler (PC)	Summerside-Wilmot (21)	Government Whip
Dillon , Susie (PC)	Charlottetown-Belvedere (11)	Deputy Speaker
Dollar , Hon. Kent (PC)	Brackley-Hunter River (15)	Minister of Housing and Communities
Henderson , Robert (L)	O’Leary-Inverness (25)	Opposition Whip
Hudson , Hon. Ernie (PC)	Alberton-Bloomfield (26)	Minister of Fisheries, Rural Development and Tourism Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy

Member and Party	Constituency (District)	Other Responsibilities
Lantz , Hon. Rob (PC)	Charlottetown-Brighton (13)	Premier Minister responsible for Indigenous Affairs Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs
MacEwen , Sidney (PC)	Morell-Donagh (7)	
MacFarlane , Matthew (G)	Borden-Kinkora (19)	Leader of the Third Party
MacKay , Matthew (PC)	Kensington-Malpeque (20)	Government House Leader
MacLennan , Hilton (PC)	Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke (23)	
McNeilly , Gordon (L)	Charlottetown-West Royalty (14)	Opposition House Leader
Perry , Hon. Hal (L)	Tignish-Palmer Road (27)	Leader of the Official Opposition
Ramsay , Hon. Barb (PC)	Summerside-South Drive (22)	Minister of Social Development and Seniors Minister responsible for the Status of Women
Redmond , Hon. Jenn (PC)	Mermaid-Stratford (5)	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Artificial Intelligence
Simpson , Carolyn (L)	Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park (9)	
Thompson , Hon. Bloyce (PC)	Stanhope-Marshfield (8)	Minister of Agriculture Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General
Trivers , Hon. Brad	Rustico-Emerald (18)	Speaker
Vacant	Cornwall-Meadowbank (16)	

[The Legislature met at 1:04 p.m.]

[Hon. B. Trivers in the chair]

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

Thank you to everybody joining us here in the gallery today; nice to see you. Big crowd here. I'm pleased to be back for another week in the Legislature. The Speaker tells us this is week 8. It doesn't feel like it; time flies when you're having fun, right?

[1:05 p.m.]

Welcome, everybody. Welcome to the staff; Pages; as I said, everyone in the gallery; everyone watching online. I wanted to make a special greeting here today. I understand we've got a large group, the Carver clan from Kings County, here, but I wanted to point out specifically Florence Carver, who will be celebrating a special birthday later this month. I won't say what special birthday, but a special one, nonetheless. We appreciate you coming in. Nice to see you. Thanks for coming.

I want to recognize a big event yesterday. I was really pleased to attend an announcement at the Charlottetown Airport alongside the federal Minister of Transportation, along with my provincial colleagues, our federal MPs, and a big group of dignitaries at the airport for the occasion. The Charlottetown Airport was officially renamed the Charlottetown Alexander B. Campbell Airport, a change that honours the Island's longest serving premier.

Under Premier Campbell's leadership, Prince Edward Island underwent a period of significant modernization and economic expansion, so renaming one of PEI's central gateways in his honour reflects the legacy of progress that he left behind. Today, the airport remains an essential engine for our local economy, it fosters growth in our tourism sector and trade, and it serves as a primary link between Islanders and the rest of the world. It was a special event.

Finally, I just want to remind everyone that this week is Family Violence Prevention Week. You'll see most of us wearing our purple ribbons. The ribbon is a representation of the

week, of course, obviously, but Family Violence Prevention Week is a vital time for our community to come together to raise awareness and support those impacted by violence. It serves as a reminder that everyone deserves to feel safe and respected in their homes and relationships. Engaging in meaningful conversations can really help us break the silence and work towards a future where our province is a safer, more compassionate place for every family.

Thank you very much. I hope everyone has a great day.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's a pleasure to rise today and welcome all those who are online and all of those in the gallery today. It's great to see a full house here today. Florence and the Carver clan, welcome to today's proceedings, along with everyone else. I see Joel Dennis is here; he's the executive director of Tremploy. Phil Taylor, welcome back. I saw Dean MacArthur coming in. Also, Kevin Porter, who is the executive director for Community Inclusions up west, and David Baglole is with him. Welcome to the proceedings.

This week is Nursing Week. I want to thank all the dedicated nurses right across Prince Edward Island for their compassion, their strength, and their unwavering care. They obviously are the heart of health care and really are the true heroes in our health care system. I want to put a shout out to everyone that works with health care and supports all Islanders.

In that, I also do want to recognize Andrea Greenan, who's in here today. She's an RN, worked with Public Health, and she is from Rustico. And I guess I have to name a few RNs in my family because every time we get together, it's nurse talk. That would be my wife, Brenda; my sister-in-law, Arlene; my sister, Heidi; my niece, Jessica Perry; Laura Montgomery Gallant; Jenna Gallant; Meaghan Millar; and my son's partner, Sabreigh Fletcher. Again, to all the nurses, thank you for what you do and what you contribute to the health care of Islanders.

I also want to send a congratulations to the nursing students who graduated today at UPEI,

and in particular, those from the Tignish-Palmer Road area: Andrea Gallant, Macy Hackett, Tanya Powers, and Hilary Shea. They're going to be excellent in our system, because I know each one of them individually.

[1:10 p.m.]

While I'm on my feet, Eddy Doyle from Skinners Pond has played with the Halifax Mooseheads for the past three seasons in the Quebec Maritime Junior Hockey League. He is now committed to Northeastern University. I want to congratulate him and wish him all the best. I know that his parents, Randy and Leslie, travelled a lot to Halifax to watch the games. I'm sure they won't be missing too many in his new home.

Tonight is game 5 of the PWHL playoff between the Minnesota Frost and the Montreal Victoire. Game 5 was supposed to take place last night, but there was illness in the Montreal team, so it was rescheduled or postponed to tonight. That's taking place in Laval at Place Bell. The winner of this game is going to advance to play against the Ottawa Charge in the Walter Cup final. I'm sure PEI will be watching and cheering on their very own Abby Hustler. I wish her all the best.

This week is Family Violence Prevention Week. There is something going on every day this week and every evening this week. Tonight in Tignish, at the municipal office at 6 p.m., everyone is invited – all ages – to an intergenerational board game night. That, again, is being sponsored by Family Violence Prevention Week. If you're in the area, drop by.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome back to all my colleagues and everyone in the Legislature this afternoon as we begin our legislative week. It's great to be back on a rainy day outside; no better place to be than inside here on a rainy day. I'd like to welcome everybody in the gallery and tuning in online.

I'd like to give a special recognition to a District 19 constituent of mine, Malcolm Ross, in the gallery today. Nice to see you, Malcolm; thanks for coming out, as part of the Project SEARCH team, I expect. We'll be hearing a little bit more

about that a little bit later. Great to see everybody in the gallery today.

As has been mentioned, today we did see at UPEI convocation ceremonies the graduating class in the faculty of nursing and the faculty of veterinary medicine. I had the pleasure of sitting up on the stage this morning with the Leader of the Liberal Party and the Member from Summerside-Wilmot to share in the celebration of the hard work of the graduating class from the faculties' joint ceremonies today between nursing and veterinary medicine. It was a wonderful event. That was my first time I got to do that, and I look forward to doing that again to celebrate the success and accomplishments of these hardworking young people from the Island and beyond.

Speaking of nurses, as has been mentioned, this is National Nursing Week with the theme being "The Power of Nurses to Transform Health." Those words are abundantly true. Nurses are often the group, the profession, that is holding the system together at various points. It is important for us, not only during Nursing Week, to recognize the contribution and the work done by our nurses as their scopes of practice broaden and as we see more reliance on nurse practitioners in our primary care system. Thank you to all our Island nurses and the work that you do.

I have mentioned before in my greetings about the good work done by the South Shore Watershed Association. Coming up this weekend, they're hosting a family fishing day on Victoria Day at the Westmoreland River Nature Park. Donations will be accepted, which will go towards fixing the park's fishing platform. There's no fishing licence required to participate. Rods and tackle will be available to rent on a pay-what-you-can basis. Thanks, again, to SSWA, for the great work that they do in the watershed area from DeSable through to North Carleton.

Wishing everyone a great day of debate here today, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

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

I'd like to say good day to all the folks in District 8. The farmers get a rainy day to fix their gear up and get ready for the planting

season that's coming ahead. I'd like to welcome the Carver clan to the Legislature. I want to recognize a special guest, Dr. Kim MacDonald – it's now Kim Carver – one of the finest vets in Prince Edward Island. She practices down east and the farmers down there are very lucky to have her. When she was going to vet college here on PEI, she worked at our farm for the four years that she went through college. She's a true friend and a great veterinarian.

Thank you.

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

K. Bernard: Thank you.

[1:15 p.m.]

I'd like to welcome back my colleagues, staff, and our Pages – Jorja, Nate, and Jackson today; thank you for being with us – everybody tuning in from Charlottetown-Victoria Park and all around the Island, and everybody in the gallery today. It's great to see a nice full gallery. I'd like to say hi to Jenn and her daughter, Amelia – Jenn Johnson and Amelia.

Just very quickly, as has been mentioned several times, this is Family Violence Prevention Week. Tomorrow in Charlottetown will be the Walk in Silence – Wear Purple Day. It will be held at 12 o'clock in Rochford Square. It's hosted by the Premier's action committee on family violence. There will be light refreshments and music afterwards. If you would like to participate in a walk somewhere else on the Island, they're happening. Just find them online; they're all at different times over the next couple of days.

Thank you.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise and say hello to everybody watching from Charlottetown-West Royalty and everybody in the gallery here today, welcome, especially to Joel Dennis who is here. Tremploy is in my district, so continued much great success. I think I'll be maybe answering to a ministerial statement a little bit later.

This week, again, as mentioned before, is National Nursing Week. I had a chance to go by UPEI and just watch the procession of graduating nurses and vet students. It was quite something. They were all smiles today – even if it was raining out – and saying hello to people. As they did, it's an important week, especially this week, to think about our districts and think about where the nurses are in our district.

I want to say a big shout-out and happy birthday to Debbie Lefurgey today in the district. I saw her yesterday. Biggest smile in the district. Happy birthday, Debbie.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I, too, would like to welcome everybody back for another week of deliberations here in the Legislature, and to everybody in the gallery. I see some folks who come here regularly, like Phil Taylor, and right in front of him, somebody who I believe hasn't been here yet this year, Bruce Cluney. It's lovely to see you, Bruce. Welcome to the proceedings today.

I want to make special note of a constituent of mine, Zoe MacKenzie, who graduated this morning from the AVC as a vet graduate. I've known Zoe since she was a very young girl. Her mom worked as a hygienist in my office. It's just amazing to imagine Zoe as Dr. Zoe MacKenzie. Congratulations to her.

And finally, hi to Lorne Yeo. Many in this House would know Lorne, of course, and he loves to come here and watch but can't at the moment, so I just wanted to say hi to him.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

R. Henderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, want to welcome those to the gallery. I want to single out, too, Bruce Cluney and Joel Dennis with Tremploy. They happen to have the Career Bridges program in O'Leary. Nancy Hamill and Paula McCue – I get the odd case where I get an invitation to come in either to

their closing or to speak to the participants there and get them to have the opportunity to “ask anything you ever wanted to ask an MLA; here’s your chance.”

The other one I want to acknowledge is Kevin Porter is Community Inclusions. He’s the executive director there, does great work with people with intellectual disabilities.

And I have a constituent here; it’s David Baglole. As you are all aware, David is quite an observer of the Legislature. He tries to come down at least once a year. He’s now living in the Willows community care facility. The last time when I had a chance to visit him there, I asked him the question: “How are things going, David?” Just so you know, David bleeds blue, and his comment was, “Health care is getting worse under this government.”

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

T. DesRoches: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I’d just like to rise today and welcome everybody in the gallery and everybody back to the proceedings. Welcome everybody at home in District 21, especially one of my faithful watchers, Kathy. Kathy, I know you’re watching. Kathy’s battling some health problems right now, so thoughts with her.

And also, while I rise, tonight is the fourth game for the Summerside Western Capitals in the Centennial Cup. Right now, they’re sitting in a crossover position, but they need that win tonight. They’re going in with one win, one loss, and one tie so far. Go, Caps, go!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. C. Deagle: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

A pleasure to rise today. I have to beg you for a bit of indulgence here. I have quite a few people in the gallery to recognize.

We do have some folks from Project SEARCH PEI in the gallery with us here today. I think they’re all sitting in the back row there, the second row. I’ll be doing a minister’s statement after Question Period, recognizing all of your

hard work. I know when I was at the QEH and spoke to Terry Campbell, the administrator at the QEH, he spoke very highly of the program, and he was very proud of it and proud of all the work that you do. I’m looking forward to recognizing you all later on after Question Period.

[1:20 p.m.]

But the biggest reason I wanted to rise today is to recognize our special guests, but particularly one guest in the gallery, who is Florence Carver. Florence turns 90 at the end of the month. She lives in a seniors unit where the old manor used to be in Montague; there’s about three buildings there and Florence is in one of those buildings. I can’t remember which one – I know which one, but I can’t think of the number off the top of my head. Florence is very well respected and liked by all of the residents in that building. I just want to say a short little piece about Florence, Mr. Speaker, and I promise I’ll sit down.

Florence worked alongside her husband, Otis, on a dairy farm in Alliston most of her life. She raised seven children and a grandmother to nine. Florence has been and still is very active in the Women’s Institute and her church. She still drives, usually taking friends and family to where they need to be. Her daughter-in-law did say, “You have to add this in”: plus, Cory Deagle is her favourite politician.

[Interjections]

Hon. C. Deagle: She wasn’t lying, I don’t think.

But I just want to recognize Florence and thank you for coming in today. There are quite a few of her family with her today. There’s Keith Carver, Robert Carver, Sydney Carver, Kim Carver, and Murray and Pam Campbell. Florence, I just want to wish you a happy birthday at the end of the month. I hope they don’t go too hard on me in Question Period here today.

Thank you.

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

Recipients of Mount Allison Honours

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Grace Annie Lockhart was the first woman in the British Empire to earn a university degree back in 1875 right here in Atlantic Canada, at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick.

To commemorate the 150th anniversary of Lockhart's historic achievement, the Mount Allison Federated Alumni Board created the Grace Annie Lockhart Sesquicentennial Pin, celebrating generations of Mount Allison women who have advanced education, public service, and social progress in Canada and beyond.

In the fall of 2025, the alumni board launched a nationwide call for nominations to honour alumnae whose achievements reflect the legacy of Ms. Lockhart. On Sunday, May 11th, Mount Allison University recognized 113 women from across Canada whose lives and careers have exemplified this legacy.

Recipients of this honour include our very own, the Hon. Catherine Callbeck, Canada's first female Premier, who has been a trailblazer not only as Premier but as a business owner, an MP, and of course, as a senator in the Senate of Canada. Other honorees with PEI connections include Dr. Bonnie Henry, Jeannie Lee, Anne Krabill, Dr. Marva Sweeney-Nixon, and Fran McBurnie.

Congratulations to these incredible women and to all the recipients of this most prestigious recognition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Shelter Movers

K. Bernard: Thank you.

Shelter Movers is a national, volunteer-powered charitable organization that provides no-cost moving and storage services to individuals and families fleeing abuse. They work closely with both local service providers and businesses to support clients. They collaborate with security teams, RCMP, and police in higher-risk situations.

Their work primarily supports women and children as they transition to a life free of violence. Their vision is a world where survivors

can move on from abuse and violence in power and dignity.

Today, Shelter Movers is the only service of its kind in Canada. In the Maritimes, they have approximately 100 volunteers and complete, on average, 25-30 moves a month. PEI is the newest jurisdiction to come under the Shelter Movers umbrella, so they will be looking for volunteers to help.

Michelle Tupy is the regional director of Shelter Movers Maritimes. She's thrilled to have PEI under their jurisdiction. When I spoke to her, she was very clear that this work is about truly supporting people who are actively fleeing domestic violence.

One survivor shared her story. Her spouse had destroyed all of her things before she came back with Shelter Movers to move out. The volunteers went through every nook and cranny to piece together all the things she would need to start fresh. She said: "The volunteers – they gave me my dignity back."

Once they moved her things and placed them in storage until she was able to find and settle into a new place, she said: "I will be forever grateful that I knew about Shelter Movers. It's the seed that helped me grow."

I would like to thank Shelter Movers for their crucial work and encourage Islanders to consider volunteering to this game-changing cause.

Thank you.

[1:25 p.m.]

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The Community Economic Development Business equity tax credit program has been an important tool for helping Island businesses raise local investment and grow in their own communities. With the program set to expire in February 2027, a government serious about economic development should already know the impact it has across Prince Edward Island. Quite frankly, if this government still doesn't know the economic impact of a program tied directly to

local jobs, businesses, and investment, that should concern Islanders.

CEDB program

Question to the minister: Has the government conducted any review or analysis of the economic impact this program has had across the province? Yes or no?

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

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

Certainly, we are watching and concerned about businesses all the time and stay engaged with them and help and support in any way we can. I'll certainly go back to the department to get the information to bring back for the member.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

This program, as I mentioned earlier, is set to expire in February 2027, and businesses are already looking for certainty about its future. The last thing that Islanders need right now is another successful employment development tool left hanging because this government cannot make a decision. If this government believes in supporting local businesses and local investment, they should not be leaving the future of this program hanging in uncertainty.

Question to the same minister: Has the government started work on extending the CEDB program beyond 2027, or is it just another decision that's being pushed down the road?

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

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

Certainly, any programs that we have within the department – some which lie in Innovation – are reviewed regularly and are responsive to the needs of businesses. We'll continue to do that with respect to the program that the hon. member is asking about.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The first question, I asked if there was a review or analysis done, and she said she would get back to me on that. Now, she says she's sure there is one done. So, can you check and see if there is a review done, an analysis done, and table that here tomorrow?

This program has encouraged Islanders to invest in their own communities instead of seeing opportunities and investments leave the province. Government talks constantly about supporting entrepreneurship, rural development, and growing the Island economy, but programs like this are those where words actually matter.

Question to the same minister: Will you commit to providing businesses and Islanders with a clear decision on the future of this program by the end of the week?

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

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

Certainly, we know the value of economic prosperity through businesses in PEI. We continue to engage and ask and connect in regards to the needs that they have. We are committed to doing that. Yes, we'll go back to the department to see if I can't gather information for the hon. member and bring it back.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you very much, and I'll look forward to a timely decision made by this Friday. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, Islanders are looking for clarity from this government on another issue that comes up across Prince Edward Island every single spring and fall, and that's the practice of changing the clocks twice a year. Every time, Islanders ask the same question –

[Interjection]

Hon. H. Perry: Every year, Mr. Speaker, Islanders ask the same question: Why are we still changing the clock twice a year?

One of this government's own members introduced legislation on permanent daylight

time back in 2021, and years later, Islanders still don't know where this government stands.

Permanent Daylight Saving Time

Question to the Premier: After years of discussion and no action, does this government actually support permanent daylight time? Yes or no?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

It's a really great question. It's something that I've committed to speak to my Atlantic Premiers about. I think if we could get a consensus about sticking to this as a region, making this decision as a region, it would be something we'd certainly pursue. If we can get that kind of agreement – we'll have to ask the public for their consent to move forward with something like this, but it does come up every spring and every fall when we fall back and spring forward.

Great question, and it's something I'll discuss with my colleagues.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

That basically was my next question: Had he had any other discussions with the other Atlantic Premiers? I know in Nova Scotia, there is a bill on the floor that actually is doing the same, but also, there's a clause in it saying we have to have buy-in from the Maritime Provinces.

[1:30 p.m.]

Premier: Will you commit again, but this time, will you commit to having that conversation in the very near future?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

Yes, I commit to getting it on the agenda of the next Council of the Atlantic Premiers meeting when that takes place, and we'll have a discussion about it. I look forward to it. I think it's an issue that all Prince Edward Islanders are quite interested in. The question arises twice a

year, and I think it's something worth considering.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, Islanders raise concerns every year about the impact that time changes have on sleep, health, productivity, and public safety. This government has had years to study the issue, yet Islanders still have no clear answers, no timeline, and no sense of whether any real work has been done. Frankly, if this government has done work on the issue, Islanders should be able to see it.

The Premier just said that he is committed to having conversations, nothing has been done yet, but we're going to see if that's clear or not.

Has the government done any analysis on the health or public safety impacts of changing the clocks twice a year, and if so, will you release it?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

No, I'm not aware of any studies that have been done by government about the impacts. Certainly, when I was raising young children, there was an impact on our household a couple of times a year where it would throw off their sleep schedule, and throw off mine as well. You know, it is a disruption to our daily routine, our sleep schedules, so in that sense, it does have an effect. I think there's probably a fair body of research out there about the effects of moving the clocks every year.

The Minister of Justice tells me that if we proceed with something like this, it would fall under his purview. So, again, I commit to having this conversation with my Atlantic colleagues to see if we can all align on this issue.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Nearly 2,800 Islanders have signed an online document opposing the cuts to program support by the Department of Education and Early Years. That's parents, educators and operators. They are telling the minister that these cuts will ripple through every community on the Island.

Early learning and child care funding (further)

Question to the Minister of Education and Early Years: Minister, what is your response to the thousands of Islanders who are concerned about these cuts?

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

Hon. R. Croucher: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess my response would be the same as it has been: our investment growth has far outpaced the federal investment in our early years sector. Costs are increasing. Those federal dollars have not kept pace.

I would encourage these members – they've been very good, strong advocates for the sector. I would encourage them to also lobby our federal government for increasing those supports so we can continue to provide the service that we have been providing.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Operators across the Island are saying – and they're saying it on the record – that these cuts will force centres to either reduce spaces or possibly close. When that happens – when families lose their child care spots and with nowhere to go – what is government's plan?

To the Minister of Education and Early Years: Has your department considered the impact of these cuts on centres dropping their spaces, or worst case, closing, and will you table your plan to address that?

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

Hon. R. Croucher: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Pedagogical support staff is not tied to centre ratio. I'll just leave it at that.

We actually, I believe, are sending out invitations to centres and directors to engage in the working group that we've stood up; I think those are going out today. I look forward to getting a lot of those advocates and strong minds in the same room, at the same table, to discuss how we can move forward and better utilize these supports.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Too little too late, Mr. Speaker.

According to the ECDA's latest email to the sector, approximately 95 percent of PEI's early learning and child care workforce are women. Cutting this support will mean job losses, reduced hours, and fewer stable employment opportunities falling almost entirely on women across the Island. At a moment when meaningful progress has been made in supporting women in workforce, this isn't the time to go backward.

Question to the Premier: Was a gender-based analysis, or any analysis at all, conducted on these cuts before they were implemented, and if so, will you table this for the House?

[1:35 p.m.]

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

Hon. R. Croucher: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't know. Bringing the gender piece in, I don't know if that's completely fair.

I do understand and recognize that there are going to be some impacts on people's jobs. I am confident with the number of spaces that we're going to be opening up in the coming months that there will be opportunities there for those individuals that are impacted. It's not lost on me that that is one of the big impacts in this reduction.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let's talk about fairness. Last week, the early learning and child care sector received two separate letters, one from the department and one from the regulatory board, both with the same message. The sector was told to stand down.

This is, in essence, silencing a group of people to say what's on their mind. Operators are now afraid to share their concerns. As I've said, 95 percent of the workforce is women. I'm going to have to say it: if the 95 percent of the workforce were men, would this be happening?

Question to the Minister of Education and Early Years: How did you not anticipate the sector feeling pressured into standing down, and how can you defend this action?

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

Hon. R. Croucher: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think they were asked to stand down. I think a lot of the messaging in those letters, although I did not pen them, was that we need to direct our advocacy in the right places.

I hear their concerns. I understand their concerns. We're at a place where we need more federal support to be able to maintain the pace of growth that we've seen. We need to be advocating with our federal partners here. They've been great partners in this, but over the last couple of years, we've seen that slide. We have to get back to that 50-50 so we can continue to offer these supports that we've been offering for the last seven or eight years. We're at \$101 million of investment in early years right now, and we need the feds at the table.

Thank you.

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

R. Henderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the Premier and some ministers were happy to smile for the cameras at the newly named Charlottetown Alexander B. Campbell Airport. Today, the airport just held its annual meeting and is talking about growth, expansion, and progress. There's a lot of optimism but also caution for the future of our YYG airport.

But Islanders were promised by this government flights – regional connectivity flights – in August. This government said tickets would go on sale in the fall. Then it said regional air service would expand this spring. Now, it's the middle of May and Islanders are still grounded.

Regional flights

Question to the Minister of Tourism: Where are the flights that taxpayers had contributed to?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Rural Development and Tourism.

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

Yes, certainly, I was pleased to attend the announcement yesterday – a great announcement honouring a great Premier of this province.

With regard to the question from the hon. member, yes, there is progress being made. There are various partners that are actually working on the plan going forward. There has been funding that is provided by the Province of PEI, in conjunction with the other Atlantic Provinces, as well as individual airports.

I would be very happy to bring back an update and table it tomorrow for all of the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you.

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

R. Henderson: Well, it's encouraging to say that there's something coming, but you announced this back in August.

Prince Edward Island put \$840,000 into this regional air service pilot, and PAL was chosen as the carrier. That is taxpayers' money, and Island taxpayers have every right to know whether any of the money has gone out the door and what exactly they have to show for it.

Question to the Minister of Tourism: Has PEI paid any of the \$840,000 to PAL yet. Yes or no? If so, what was actually delivered for the money?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Rural Development and Tourism.

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

As I had indicated in the answer to the hon. member's first question, I will bring back details tomorrow.

But I think you look at the airport, you look at the bridge, you look at our cruise ships, for example, that come into Charlottetown, right across the board – you look at the increase –

[Interjection]

[1:40 p.m.]

Hon. E. Hudson: No, but you do look at the increase in tourism, how great of a generator it is in the economy of PEI, and the newly named Alex B. Campbell Airport in Charlottetown is a vital partner in delivering and providing the availability/access to our beautiful province.

Thank you.

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

R. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, this is the 2000s. We're not in tall ships and cruise ships coming into the harbour from the 1800s. This file has gone from fall to spring to now – not sure.

This is not a delay, it's a broken promise, and it was made by this Premier. This Premier seems to dodge the question on it.

Question to the Premier: Why did you make that promise of a regional air service that your government still cannot deliver on?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

Negotiations are ongoing with the air provider. They are complex negotiations, and also complicated by the recent global events over the past several months that have really stressed the airline industry. If you look south of the border, you've got airlines exiting the industry, going bankrupt, largely as a result of the cost of fuel. So, that is another wildcard inserted into these negotiations.

But the process is ongoing and we look forward to expanding regional air service here in the Atlantic region.

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

R. Henderson: Well, Mr. Speaker, it seemed like there was a by-election on at the time when these announcements were made.

But anyway, government announced the money. Government announced that the provincial airlines based in Newfoundland were going to provide the service, but Islanders still do not know what PAL was actually required to deliver. I mean, they had to have made some sort of a commitment to say before the announcement was made. But right today, Islanders still can't book a flight on PAL Airlines, and it's so important to connect with other jurisdictions in other cities to go to other flights across the world.

A question to the Minister of Tourism: What were PAL's timelines and performance requirements under this deal, and is this company meeting them today, yes or no?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Rural Development and Tourism.

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

Certainly, as I had said in my response to the two previous questions that I stood here, I will bring back the details, the information tomorrow for the hon. member, for all MLAs in this Legislature, and for the public.

I want to reiterate though, and I want to stress: we are working with partners on this side of the House. We're working with our Atlantic partners. We're working with the air industry. We're working with airlines to bring this about.

I do agree completely with the hon. member; it is of vital importance to have those services that were announced, that we are working towards. It's of vital importance to have them for the province of PEI and our Atlantic counterparts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

R. Henderson: One would have to assume, Mr. Speaker, that when you make an announcement, there were agreements already in place. PAL

Airlines had an agreement, ACOA had an agreement, and so did the provinces.

This was never really about hopping between Maritime cities. Regional flights were supposed to connect Prince Edward Island into a wider network, bring more visitors here – I mean, he's the Minister of Tourism – help businesses move people more easily, and give Canadians another reason to choose to come to Prince Edward Island during the summer.

Question to the Minister of Tourism: What economic impact did government expect from these extra flights to have on the tourism business and travel this summer, and what kind of a missed opportunity are we facing here in Prince Edward Island for this year?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Rural Development and Tourism.

Hon. E. Hudson: The hon. member says missed opportunities that we're seeing here in PEI.

Mr. Speaker, there has never been a government that has partnered with tourism industry associations to raise the bar to increase the visitors to the province of PEI. It has been unprecedented. The tourism industry is vital. It is vibrant. It is growing day by day. The Charlottetown Airport – the newly named Alexander B. Campbell Charlottetown Airport – is and will continue to be a vital part of our tourism strategy and increasing the tourist visitors to the province of PEI.

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

R. Henderson: Well, Mr. Speaker, actually the airport at the annual meeting said their visitation actually declined slightly last year, just to give you an update on that.

[1:45 p.m.]

The airport appears to be doing its part. The terminal projects are moving forward, new departure space has opened, and the airport is ready to welcome more visitors, but ribbon cuttings and photo ops do not get tourists here on their own, and they do not help Island businesses if promised flights never touch down.

YYG has seen a small decrease in arrivals in '25, but maybe with another by-election pending, we can get a clearer answer here.

Question to the Premier: Will the Premier give Islanders a firm launch date today for this regional air service? Even if he can, why should anybody believe this promise, as the last announcement was made during a by-election too?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

No, I can't give a firm launch date, and I was clear about that at the time of the announcement. The announcement itself was to announce the agreement between our regional partners. It took governments in the region working together through the Council of Atlantic Premiers to come to this agreement, issue an RFP to identify a partner to negotiate with, which is happening now. I look forward – it can't happen fast enough. Very important to have regional connectivity throughout Atlantic Canada, and I look forward to them coming to that agreement.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: A strong trend is starting to emerge for this government, Mr. Speaker. (Indistinct)

Government hears Islanders' concerns, they know what needs to be done, but they lack the confidence to act. So, what do they do? They order a review. Islanders have made it clear that IRAC isn't working for them. Gas prices, land transactions, and electricity rates, which all fall into the purview of IRAC, are not being handled transparently.

Status of government reviews

Question to the Premier: Is merely promising to do a review of IRAC, with no details and no timeline, really the best solution you can offer to Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. R. Lantz: Mr. Speaker, we announced in the Speech from the Throne that we were committed to a review of IRAC – its structure, its mandate, its processes – so that it's operating efficiently and in the best interests of Prince Edward Island. We will follow through on that commitment. We will follow through. It will have a timeline. It will have a mandate. It will have everything we've committed to, and I look

forward to announcing that in the very near future.

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

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're all looking forward to that announcement. Can't wait.

A review of our school system was completed almost two years ago – the inclusion report. We all hear the stories of growing violence and challenges in our Island schools, but to this day, while teachers, EAs, and students all continue to struggle, that review sits on a shelf with no action being taken. It's a cautionary tale of what happens when this government does a review.

Question to the Premier. The review is complete. We know what needs to be done. Why are you not ensuring that your minister implements the changes that will benefit our Island schools?

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

Hon. R. Croucher: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over the coming days, maybe in the next week or so, we're going to be releasing some of the work that's been underway that's in various stages of either completion or implementation. There's work happening every day in the department. There's work happening every day in our schools to make our schools safer and more inclusive for students. We're going to continue that work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Reviews are all well and good if they are at least acted on once completed, but there is ample evidence from the past seven years of this PC government that reviews rarely result in action. Untold millions of dollars have been spent on consultants who have reviewed our health care system, our land, our gas prices, and our education system.

Question to the Premier: If you're not ready to act, Mr. Premier, on issues that matter to

Islanders, then do you agree it's time to get out of the way and let someone govern who is?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. R. Lantz: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Third Party asserts that this government hasn't acted on recommendations but gives no examples whatsoever. This government has acted. The entire mandate of this government has been about action for Prince Edward Island. I welcome the leader of the opposition providing some examples because that's what this government does every day when it comes to work – acting on behalf of Prince Edward Islanders.

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

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

Here comes an example, Mr. Premier.

Islanders were promised by this Premier that holding Maritime Electric to account would be the first order of business in this sitting. Now that the legislation has actually finally been tabled to create the modern and reliable electricity system at the lowest possible cost to Islanders, Maritime Electric is now lobbying government to slow it down and delay action.

Maritime Electric (further)

A question to the Premier: Will you stand with Islanders and demand accountability and transparency, or will you stand with Maritime Electric and demand more reviews and delays?

[1:50 p.m.]

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

This government is committed to the energy file and regulatory reform. We've got a four-step process to review our regulatory environment. We'll bring regulatory amendments to this Legislature.

We are in an environment where we need to modernize our regulatory environment for the energy future of Prince Edward Island. This government's doing that work, and it's not through this bill that has not been well

consulted. We'll take our own action, on our own time, in the best interests of Prince Edward Islanders.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Maritime Electric's own letters, which I'm going to table later this afternoon, are very revealing. They do not claim that the bill is unworkable. They do not claim that Islanders deserve less accountability. Instead, they argue that there should be more delays, more consultation, and more study before anything changes.

A question to the Premier: How many more studies, more consultations, and more delays does Maritime Electric get before this government finally takes some action?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Hon. E. Hudson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I do thank the hon. member for the questions.

I know that we're all here working, looking forward, working for Islanders. I've said before with regard to the energy file, which is under my responsibility presently, that yes, what are the two things? It's reliability. It's affordability.

I know that the hon. member is referring to Bill 108 that we have debated and may come back for further debate. I look forward to the questions being answered that we have put forward before, additional questions that will be put forward.

But at the end of the day, regulatory changes – they need to be done, but they need to be done right. We do not need unintended consequences resulting from any legislation that is brought forward in this Legislature. And again, I do look forward to the hon. member bringing that back if the third party so chooses.

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

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

I mean, the only unintended consequence would be lower bills for Islanders. I mean, I don't understand why you're so against this.

Ironically, Maritime Electric refused to even meet with me to discuss the bill while, at the same time, they wrote to the Premier urging government not to proceed. Islanders are watching very closely because they know exactly how powerful Maritime Electric is.

A question to the Premier: Has Maritime Electric succeeded in convincing you to back away from the accountability measures that you promised Islanders months ago?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. R. Lantz: Mr. Speaker, it's amazing to me that the member can rise in this House and assert that his bill would reduce energy prices, when all evidence indicates that it would have the opposite effect. It's a half-baked bill. He brought it here in a hurry to make a political stance in this House. It's bad legislation, and I'm not going to support it.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

T. DesRoches: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The mental health and addictions capital redevelopment project represents one of the most significant investments in the history of our province's health care system. For decades, mental health services were pushed to the sidelines, housing aging facilities that didn't meet the needs of patients or staff. Our government is changing that by building a modern, world-class campus that integrates care and recovery. Islanders are watching this progress closely.

Mental health and addictions services

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Can you update us on the status of the mental health and addictions capital redevelopment project, including which projects are now complete and what key features Islanders can expect from this new model of care?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. C. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to do my best.

I know that Lacey House opened in 2022; the structured programming facility, in 2023. The adult mental health emergency unit at the QEH –

but the actual hospital itself, I believe it's about a year and a half to two years away from completion.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, first supplementary.

[1:55 p.m.]

T. DesRoches: Mr. Speaker, while this vital infrastructure is being built out, access to timely care remains a daily necessity. Islanders navigating the complex system need to know exactly where to turn for help today, whether they are in a moment of crisis or seeking long-term recovery support.

Question to the Minister of Health: How can Island residents access mental health and addictions services right now for urgent situations and ongoing care as we transition to this new mental health and campus model?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. C. Deagle: Mr. Speaker, I know we have a variety of services kind of spread out across PEI which are very community oriented. We have the adult mental health emergency unit at the QEH. Right now, the RFP is out for the child psychiatric unit at the QEH as well.

We do have a wide variety of services across PEI. We've really made a lot of strides over probably the last ten years on this file. I think the former government – including – and our government have made a lot of progress on this file.

Obviously, it will be really nice to see that new campus when it's fully operational and up and running.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, second supplementary.

T. DesRoches: Mr. Speaker, while we look forward to a new campus, we cannot ignore the immediate safety concerns in our existing facilities, particularly in Summerside at the PCH. Right now, when individuals are taken into police custody while in a mental health crisis, there are not enough or adequate secure rooms to ensure they and the staff that are caring for them are safe.

A question to the Minister of Health: Is the lack of secure rooms for those in custody being addressed in the current redevelopment plan, and what is the anticipated timeline for completing these high-security clinical spaces?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I'm not overly familiar with the plan and the floor plan at the PCH, but I guess what I could commit to is working with the member to see if there's an opportunity, perhaps within the capital budget, to see if we can renovate a space to make this work. I know that the member has raised this with the former Minister of Health.

I don't want to make any commitments, but I'll commit to working with him to see if we can find a solution.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-Pownal.

B. Curran: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The folks I represent in Georgetown-Pownal have a deep-seated pride in their local identity and how they manage their own affairs. It's also been clear to me that the best ideas don't usually come from an office here in Charlottetown but from the kitchen tables and community halls across the province.

That's why it was encouraging to see the Department of Housing and Communities hitting the road last year to conduct a thorough review of the *Municipal Government Act*. This is about being proactive and making sure legislation keeps pace with the way our communities are growing and changing.

Municipal Government Act review

A question to the Minister of Housing and Communities: Can the minister update this House on the conversations his department has had with Islanders during that review and how that feedback is being used to make sure local governments actually function for their residents?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing and Communities.

Hon. K. Dollar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The member is right. We did go out and do a review of the *Municipal Government Act*. The feedback that we received from the municipalities – we really did appreciate the feedback. It was clear that the MGA did not meet the requirements of the smaller municipalities, and we need to do some work there. The Province has committed to working with the smaller municipalities to make it all work.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-Pownal.

B. Curran: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Right now, we have a situation where a municipality of roughly around 10,000 people is often expected to jump through the same administrative hoops as a city of about 40,000.

A question to the Minister of Communities: What changes is the department considering that recognize these different realities and provide more flexibility for our smaller municipalities to serve their residents?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing and Communities.

Hon. K. Dollar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some of the feedback we received was the office hours that the municipalities had to hold; council size can be a challenge for some of the smaller municipalities. We're working at improving the transparency and working with the Federation of Municipalities to come to agreements.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-Pownal, second supplementary.

B. Curran: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer.

The people that I represent value their independence, and they want to know that government is a partner in their success. We've seen record-level investments, as I've mentioned, in our rural infrastructure lately. Updating this act is another way that we can provide long-term stability for our areas across the province. This is about building a framework that supports our backbone communities without adding unnecessary red tape.

[2:00 p.m.]

Question to the same minister: Can the minister confirm that he will continue to consult closely with all municipal leaders as the changes move forward, ensuring that the future of our Island communities remains bright, vibrant, and locally led?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing and Communities.

Hon. K. Dollar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When I did speak at the Federation of Municipalities AGM, I did commit to them that anything that was brought forward would be consulted with them beforehand, and that doesn't change today.

Thank you.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A new labour market bulletin from Employment and Social Development Canada says the total hours worked in health occupations on PEI went up almost 20 percent last year, but employment in health and social assistance went up only about 8 percent – that's the amount of people – which means the gap is being covered through longer hours and overtime.

Let's stop pretending that it's a success story. We're getting Islanders to work more, and there are less of them.

Staffing in health care (further)

Question to the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning: If this government's workforce plan is working, why is it still built on overworking the people already here?

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

Hon. Z. Bell: Okay, I'd ask the hon. member to table that. I think I've mentioned in the House before that, actually, the number of people that are working on PEI is the highest number it's ever been: 93,500. The actual salary, the average wages of Islanders, is one of the highest per capita. I don't want to say it because I don't know, but I know that the amount of money that

Islanders have been getting paid has been increasing. I can't remember. It's 88.6...? I forget that number off the top of my head.

I would ask the hon. member to table the document, then I would have a better understanding to answer his question.

Thank you.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

That's a quarterly labour market – that's out from the federal government, and I will table it for you so that you can see it, but I figured that you would have it already.

I'll ask the Minister of Health: Are you seeing those concerns in the workforce? People are working longer into their careers, we're taxing them more, and they're doing more. We need them to stick around, but they're coming to us and saying: "Look, I'm burning out." Are you hearing the same things in your workforce?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I don't think it would be any secret that I know that folks are working longer and it's a very difficult situation. It is nice to see those individuals who want to stay in the system and support the system; I think it shows their dedication to our health care system.

You referenced a few numbers there – in his previous question – but my assumption would be that some of that would come from moving from part-time to full-time work. But yeah, I think those concerns are legitimate, and we don't want to burn out our current workforce that we have.

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

G. McNeilly: It's Nursing Week this week, and their top concern – we hear it over and over again – is workplace violence. The Nurses' Union has come to us with different reports. When they're reporting these incidents,

sometimes they don't come and report them. The top three reasons they don't:

- They didn't think anything would change
- Incident seen as part of the job
- Lack of time

So, they are burning out. They are working very hard.

Health care workplace violence

Minister: What are you doing to address workplace violence in our nursing community here in Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

It is a really good question. I know that the president of the Nurses' Union raised this with us when we met with her a few weeks ago. The member asked questions last week in particular to one individual in a home and that person's threatening behaviour towards residents and staff. I can say that that individual will be transferred out of that facility this week.

Overall, we have seen improvements in workplace culture and harassment, but there is still a lot of work to do, and I'm certainly committed to keeping that work going.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hillsborough Hospital

Question to the minister. Hillsborough Hospital – they do great work there. I'm concerned about the staffing there. This week, we're hearing that someone left the facility, and I want to know what safeguards and security are in place at that facility and does the minister know about this incident?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. C. Deagle: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[2:05 p.m.]

This is a really good question – one that was only brought to my attention yesterday evening around five o'clock, actually. What I would say is that it's very concerning. We're going to initiate a review of policy and how this happened. It shouldn't have happened. The individual has actually been gone now for five days, and no idea where this individual is – at least up until before I came in for Question Period, unless that's changed. But what procedures were taken? Was policy followed? We'll have to look into this because we can't have this happening.

Completely agree. We've got to get to the bottom of this.

Thank you.

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Project SEARCH PEI

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

Today, I rise to recognize an outstanding program that is helping create opportunities, build confidence, and strengthen our workforce here on Prince Edward Island.

Project SEARCH is an internationally recognized workforce transition program that helps young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism prepare for meaningful, community-based employment. It's based at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in partnership with Health PEI, Skills PEI, and Tremploy, a charitable non-profit organization.

Project SEARCH gives participants the chance to complete immersive internship rotations throughout the hospital over a ten-month period. They build practical skills and gain real workplace experience and independence that support long-term career success.

The program is funded through the Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning, and it is making a real difference in the lives of young Islanders. I think the results speak for themselves. The 2025 graduating group achieved 100 percent employment outcomes. This is an incredible accomplishment and one that reflects the hard work of the participants, the strength of the program, and the support of

employers who recognize the value each person brings.

We are already seeing that success in action. Mitchell Thomas, a 2025 graduate, is now employed as a health records clerk 2 at the QEH. From a health care perspective, programs like this are helping build stronger workplaces across our health system.

This program shows what's possible when employers and community partners work together to support people who have historically faced barriers to employment.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all the graduates, interns, staff, and partners of Project SEARCH PEI, as well as the Queen Elizabeth Hospital staff, for helping break down stigma while building more inclusive workplaces. This program is changing lives for participants, and it's strengthening our workforce and communities. That is why we are proud to recognize it here today.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to recognize all the program participants in the gallery. Thank you for all the work that you do. I know that the QEH speaks extremely highly of you. We're just very proud of you. When I saw the story on CBC, I said we have to invite them in to the Legislature – and give you the recognition you duly deserve.

Thank you.

[Hear, hear!]

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise and welcome everybody. Put a smile on your face because that's what I'm hearing that you're bringing to Prince Edward Island, and you do it all the time, and we need you. People in our community, especially when they are in the health care field – they need you to provide that. Thanks for what you do, and thank you to the Tremploy staff, the program coaches/instructors, and participants themselves who are here today.

This is a program that we can build on, I think, in Prince Edward Island, and do as much as we can. I'd support the minister to do that.

But lifting people up is what you do. I will continue to support you all the time. Thanks for smiling, and thanks for making other people's lives a bit better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for taking the time to deliver this very important and special statement in the Legislature.

Project SEARCH is a wonderful program that I've come to learn a little bit about over the past year. I can't say enough about it. I'd like to thank and congratulate everyone who's involved with the program. Barry Galloway and others who make the program happen, as the minister said, to help build practical skills for individuals and also build the confidence in the workplace to be able to work, find the work, and to contribute in such a meaningful way in our health care system.

It's incredibly special that this program takes place in our hospital, and the outcome – 100 percent employment. That's incredible. What a wonderful outcome for the program.

I'd like to just, in closing, congratulate everyone involved – Malcolm and all your friends who you've come to make; I'm sure you've made a lot of friends in the program. Thank you for what you're doing. Looking forward to seeing what the future holds for all of you.

Thank you so much.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability.

[2:10 p.m.]

Hon. J. Burridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today is census day in Canada, and I encourage all Islanders to take part in the 2026 Census to complete their questionnaire. Every response counts. An accurate census ensures that Islanders receive the attention, resources, and planning they deserve, today and into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I guess the Minister of Finance – that was a really short statement and one that we didn't know was coming, but we did receive it in the mail. We filled ours out and put it back pretty quick.

But I do see online, unfortunately, many people are taking it the wrong way and just throwing it in the garbage. They're throwing it in the garbage. They're showing videos of doing that. That does impact the future here of not only Prince Edward Island, but all of Canada because those numbers are very, very important – again, as the minister said, for the resources, to make them available for our future.

I encourage everyone to get that Census back in the mail because it does not only help us; it helps them too.

Thank you.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: I'll go half the time that the minister took. Thank you, minister, for the announcement. The foundation of good public policy is good data and good evidence, and we will get that through the census. Fill it out.

Thank you.

Speaker: Well done, member. Well done.

[Laughter]

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Rural Development and Tourism.

Opening of 2026 Golf Season

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

After a long winter on the bench, it's finally time to dust off the clubs. As of this week, nearly all of PEI's golf courses are open, marking the start of what is shaping up to be another exceptional year for Canada's Golf Island.

I guess you could say golf season is officially in full swing here in PEI. In recent years, our golf sector has delivered record-setting performance, including some of the highest numbers of rounds

played in our history. That success translates into real economic benefits – supporting jobs, generating revenue, and strengthening communities across the province – and this year is already showing very strong signs. As of April 30th, vacation sales through Golf PEI are up 51 percent compared to the same time last year and have already surpassed last year's total sales. At the same time, the average length of stay is increasing, contributing to a 37 percent rise in room nights sold.

These early indications are particularly encouraging, as they run counter to broader tourism trends seen right across the country. This positive momentum includes our three provincially owned golf courses. I'm pleased to say that Crowbush and Brudenell are now open, and Dundarave will be opening shortly.

In recent years, these courses have seen strong performance, and we are well positioned for another excellent season. That success is especially meaningful when we reflect on the not-too-distant past. Not long ago, there were discussions about divesting these assets. Today they are thriving, making a valuable contribution to both our economy as well as our tourism sector.

Golf continues to be a cornerstone of PEI's tourism offering. Visitors are drawn here for a complete world-class golf experience, quality accommodations, incredible food, and unique local products that keep people coming back here year after year. Beyond its economic impact, the game plays an important role in our Island lifestyle. It brings people together, encourages outdoor activity, and contributes to healthy, vibrant communities.

As we look ahead to the 2026 season, we remain focused on maintaining high standards, enhancing the player experience, and supporting the continued success of this important sector.

Certainly, I would like to recognize the dedicated staff, operators, and industry partners whose hard work ensures our courses are ready to welcome players from near and far.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

R. Henderson: The Minister of Finance and Affordability would have said the same amount

in a shorter period of time. So, you may need some advice on that.

[Laughter]

[2:15 p.m.]

R. Henderson: But we do have some good golf courses on Prince Edward Island. I certainly want to single out a couple here, Mill River and St. Felix, which are the western end of the province. I think both of them are open and doing well.

I also will say maybe government was fortuitous in the perspective of linking its NHL contract and advertisements with its golf courses as the minister is a big Leafs fan and they're always the first to be on the golf courses at any given time. Maybe there's something to that.

I do think we have a good golf product here on Prince Edward Island, as we do with the culinary products. Good on seeing the golf courses get opened. I have they have a great and wonderful year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I feel like I have all the space in the world to talk about this.

[Laughter]

P. Bevan-Baker: I was at the airport this morning with the member who just replied to the minister's statement, amongst others in the House, and I had a lovely chat with Sam MacPhail, who's been the ED of Golf PEI for three or four years now, I think. Sam is very proud of what has happened. I mean, it was a great institution before, but the 50 percent increase in early bookings – that's exactly what he told me this morning, so minister, you must be right on.

He also said how important return visitors have become to Golf PEI – that when they call up here and they speak to somebody at Golf PEI, it's very personal, intimate process. It's not an AI business; they're speaking to real people at Golf PEI. He told me how often people will call back and say, "Oh, I spoke to you last year, and

my family is coming again because we were treated so well.”

There’s a brilliant product here that we have, and hopefully we’ll have another great summer weather-wise, that we will fill the courses as we did last year.

I want to thank the minister for the announcement and thank Golf PEI for doing such a fantastic job.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Recognition of Guests II

Speaker: I’d like to call on the Minister of Land and Environment for recognition of guests.

Hon. D. Compton: Thank you very much for your indulgence, Mr. Speaker.

I’d like to recognize Barbara and Brian Gillis. They’re joining here in the gallery today. I saw you waving at my seatmate here and I’m like, “How do you know them?” But I hear that Gus and Jack are good friends with my seatmate’s Jack.

Welcome. I don’t remember seeing you in here before, but it’s an interesting place to be. As you can see, we have a little bit of fun, but we also do very serious work. Thank you very much for coming.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a letter from the Early Childhood Development Association clarifying their previous message and identifying a path forward for the sector to the continued concerns on the cuts. I move, seconded by the hon. Member from O’Leary-Inverness, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a letter to the Minister of Education and Early Years from the ECDA outlining their concerns with cuts to support staff, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from O’Leary-Inverness, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a letter from the ECDA to the Premier outlining their concerns with the cuts to support staff, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from O’Leary-Inverness, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a letter from the Department of Education and Early Years to the early childhood sector asking the sector to basically stand down, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from O’Leary-Inverness, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a letter from the regulatory board to the early childhood sector in support of the letter from the department, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from O’Leary-Inverness, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, by Command of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table the 2024-2025 *Victims of Crime Act* annual report and I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West
Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[2:20 p.m.]

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table the *Labour Market Bulletin*. This covers the months of January to March 2026. This is a national document, and this shows the amount of total hours in health care is up by 20 percent and the people are not following suit, which is causing people to work longer hours and to pick up those times with working overtime, stressing out our workforce. I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park, 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, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a letter from the executive director of Maritime Electric, Jason Roberts, to the Premier dated April 29th, 2026, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky
Point.

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

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table another letter from Jason Roberts dated May 4th, 2026, to myself, again related to Bill No. 108, the amendments to the *Electric Power Act* and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, that the said

document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

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

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability, that the 1st order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Deputy Clerk: Order No. 1, Consideration of the Estimates, in Committee.

Speaker: Minister.

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the grant of supplementary supply to His Majesty.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'd like to call upon the hon Member from Kensington-Malpeque to chair Committee of the Whole House considering grant to His Majesty.

[M. MacKay in the chair]

M. MacKay: The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to further consider the grant of supply to His Majesty.

Minister, do you have a stranger you'd like to take to the floor?

Hon. E. Hudson: Yes, please.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Can you please state your name and title for Hansard, please?

Stephen Mutch: Stephen Mutch, director of finance.

Chair: We are now on the top of page 89 – Golf Courses. It has been read but hasn't been carried. I'm not sure who was last on the list so we'll probably have to start here again.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Operations and Industry Investment:
20,065,700

Shall it carry? Carried.

Research and Engagement

Research and Analytics

“Appropriations provided for strategic planning, evaluation and research services, and customer relationship management.” Administration: 4,900. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 5,600. Professional Services: 375,000. Salaries: 692,900. Travel and Training: 5,400.

Total Research and Analytics: 1,083,800

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Chair.

[2:25 p.m.]

Hi and welcome back. My question is related to professional services. This particular division would be research and analytics related to all of tourism within the department. I'm wondering: why the drop down in professional services?

Stephen Mutch: You're looking at the spend –

C. Simpson: \$375,000 down from \$490,000.

Stephen Mutch: In '25-26, we did have some federal funding through the short-term rental enforcement fund. There were some additional upgrades funded through that to the CRM system. I forget what that stands for at the moment, but that's basically the database that the operators use for inspections and data.

C. Simpson: Does that mean with that bump that that revised data base or revisions to the data base are in place now and that's operational?

Stephen Mutch: Yeah. There were upgrades completed last year and there's some additional upgrades that are planned for this year, in '26-27. They're actually budgeted in a separate section, but they will be completed and at that point, the federal funding will end, and the system should be 100 percent operational – where we want it to be.

C. Simpson: I'm wondering in terms of strategic planning for Tourism PEI, I'm not sure where in the budget a strat plan for development around how to promote tourism or bring more tourism might be found. Is this the division? If so, what projects are being contemplated now?

Hon. E. Hudson: Yes, the tourism strategy would be under this section, member. That, I would have to say, has been a very successful strategy. Probably I'll ask my stranger to provide a bit of additional information on that, but the strategy would be under this section.

C. Simpson: Go ahead.

Stephen Mutch: Sorry about that. Under that strategy, it was a five-year tourism strategy. We're now in year 3 of that. There were 28 initiatives organized under four key pillars optimizing the tourism enabling environment, marketing and sales, improving tourism products experiences, infrastructure, and improving tourism capacity. There is an implementation that's in place and monitoring the progress of that strategy.

C. Simpson: I can't see in here where the breakdown for funding would be to enable that work to continue. Do you feel that the budget is adequate to continue that work with the committee and others on staff to promote tourism?

Stephen Mutch: The funding for the strategy would be throughout the whole Crown, right. But the folks who manage that strategy and work to develop it, the staffing dollars are here. The staff that really work on the nuts and bolts of the whole strategy. Under consulting, there are some additional amounts in there that would help with enabling different portions of the strategy. Some of the amounts you'll see under the consulting would be to do with that like the cost of the CRM system would obviously be a big part of that as well.

C. Simpson: I'm good, Chair. Thank you.

Chair: Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair, and welcome back to the table.

Just a quick one, maybe, off the top: The climate change strategy for \$66,418. What was that about?

Stephen Mutch: Tourism PEI was working with the Tourism Association of PEI. They've engaged a consulting company, ICF Consulting. They are working to develop an assessment and adaption plan for Tourism PEI. That work, it started I believe last year and is going to finish in the next few months.

M. MacFarlane: Do we know, specific to the Department of Tourism and for the tourism industry as a whole, what the goal or outcome is with respect to that strategy?

[2:30 p.m.]

Stephen Mutch: I would think that would be the end report would sort of guide the next steps on that, I believe. Once that's in place, there'll be some work completed to determine what the next steps from that report would be. I think that's probably what you're asking.

M. MacFarlane: I guess what I'm wondering about is if it's specific to something like shoulder season extension because of the changing climate with respect to how it impacts our seasons. I'm just trying to get a sense, in the tourism section, what the climate change strategy would be for tourism.

Hon. E. Hudson: It's a good question. I think that we have to look – wait really, until the actual strategy is provided and then follow up with the actions that are outlined in that strategy.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you for that. We'll stay tuned, I guess, on that.

This section does evaluation and research services. I know there was discussion with the other member on that. Are there specific projects that have been formally evaluated?

Hon. E. Hudson: One of the things on this, as I understand it, there's an exit survey, for example, that's carried out with visitors that are leaving the province just to get that feedback on what their positive experiences were – let's be

frank, if you look at the last couple of years and the growth of the tourism sector, those positive experiences have been quite high – but also where we might be able to improve things and take action to improve the visitor experience when they're here in the province.

M. MacFarlane: I think that's very important and I appreciate that there's thought given to that exit interview strategy. How does that get deployed to tourists so that we are getting as many responses and as much feedback as we can?

Hon. E. Hudson: What we have here is a questionnaire, print survey packages, and prepaid return envelopes. Tourism PEI conducts the survey on a four-year cycle.

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

R. Henderson: Just on the question of air access strategy – you paid \$16,698. Can you give me any update on what that strategy is about? Did we get our money value for it? Because that was basically my questions today.

Stephen Mutch: The money in this section was actually to develop the next steps moving forward, which led to the PAL Airlines agreement. That was in support of the Council of Atlantic Premiers initiative to develop and implement an Atlantic Canadian air access strategy. Tourism PEI – the CEO chaired that working group. Then we contracted InterVISTAS, which was a company that developed that strategy which then led us down the path of the PAL Airlines work that's being undertaken.

R. Henderson: The odd part I'm still going back to is that you made the announcement – an announcement on the announcement – and it's never been implemented, but you had a strategy, you had everything in place. It just seems odd that you'd have an announcement premature to the roll out of the plan. Minister, what's your response to that? I just don't get that part of it. You were going to contribute \$840,000 and we haven't seen a flight yet.

Chair: The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness, can you make that a budget question?

R. Henderson: Okay, just on the budget, if we're looking at the \$840,000, how come that's

not in this line item? Where did that money come from?

Stephen Mutch: The \$840,000 – it's a three-year agreement. It's under administration. That grant amount is actually in a previous section.

R. Henderson: Okay, okay. Thanks.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

[2:35 p.m.]

Just picking up where I left off in the last question that when this section here does evaluation of programs, my question was what programs were evaluated last year? I think, minister, you responded by discussing the exit survey. But were there specific programs pursued under our tourist strategy that got evaluated?

Stephen Mutch: This section here would do some general research. An example would be: there is work done around meetings and conventions, so we would hire folks to go attend meetings and conventions. They would gather contact information from folks who attended, and then Tourism PEI would follow up with questions. Then, after we get the feedback, we would provide meetings and conventions with areas for improvement or what people liked.

I believe we did similar – Tourism PEI itself did some work on Jack Frost, I know was one for sure, where they actively were out and were talking to people and getting feedback and then providing that feedback to the organizers.

Those are two specific ones.

M. MacFarlane: One of the initiatives that the Province has supported that's cost probably the most amount of money in recent years would be the NHL sponsorship package. Would this be the section where there'd be some evaluation done with respect to the return on that investment?

Stephen Mutch: Yeah, I believe that evaluation is part of the actual contract. That would be in the advertising section as well.

Hon. E. Hudson: I believe that's right. Advertising and public relations section, I do believe.

M. MacFarlane: Yeah, I had a note that that's where we would find sort of the investment there, but I was thinking that in this research and analytics section, there might be that work done to evaluate the impact. But I guess I'm hearing it's self-contained within the contract itself, so we won't find a separate section where that particular sponsorship package got sort of an overview or monitoring.

Stephen Mutch: Yeah, correct, other than that the staff here would be involved in that process when we receive the information. But as far as actual dollars, it would all be self-contained within the contract.

M. MacFarlane: That's all I have on this section, Chair.

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

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

I'm not 100 percent sure if this is the right section or not, but when I look at the strategic planning, something that I've heard over the years is about neuro-inclusive tourism – families who have a family member living with neurodiversity. It's kind of a place that they come where it's been considered. Hotels might have their photos bolted to the wall. There might be just different kinds of accommodations for people. Maybe there's a lock higher up on the door if they have a child who's at risk of fleeing.

I'm wondering if there's any money in this budget or if there have been any conversations had around what that might look like if PEI were to become a neuro-inclusive tourism destination?

Hon. E. Hudson: It's an excellent point, excellent question – suggestion, I guess, I can say, too – that you raise. To the best of my knowledge, no, there has not been, but it's something, certainly, if you like, member, I'll take back to Tourism PEI as a suggestion to have it looked into and follow up back with you on an individual basis.

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

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Research and Analytics: 1,083,800

Shall it carry? Carried.

Regulatory Affairs and Operator Advancement

“Appropriations provided for the management and administration of licensing and compliance.” Administration: 71,400. Debt: 10,000. Equipment: 35,000. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 72,000. Professional Services: 850,000. Salaries: 699,200. Travel and Training: 120,000.

Total Regulatory Affairs and Operator Advancement: 1,857,600

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thanks, Chair.

Management and administration of licensing and compliance – would this be where the work formerly done by Quality Tourism Services, QTS, is now housed? Under this section?

Hon. E. Hudson: Yes.

[2:40 p.m.]

M. MacFarlane: Looking at the budget, I’m seeing that the total budget for the section seems to have actually decreased by \$400,000, give or take. Is all of that work that was previously done by QTS being done now with a less budget?

Hon. E. Hudson: What contributes to this as well – to the overall funding of it – is a federal short-term rental enforcement fund.

M. MacFarlane: And where do we see that contribution?

Stephen Mutch: That amount is under revenue. This year I believe it’s.... This is the last year for it. It’s a three-year federal agreement. It’s \$1.68 million in ’26-27. Some of the expenditures here will – when that funding ends, this budget will also decrease; not by that amount, but it will decrease next year going forward.

M. MacFarlane: This is the last year for that \$1.6 million. That’s a fair bit of money. I can see how that would contribute to meeting the expenses of the section, but you’re saying, Stephen, if I heard you right, that you’re not expected to make up dollar for dollar for that federal funding when it disappears?

Stephen Mutch: Yeah, it’s not quite dollar for dollar. We were able to use some existing

positions and some existing services that we offered as almost a matching part of that. We were spending net new dollars on some – I talked about the customer relationship manager, the CRM system. The upgrades for that were funded through that. We had some additional staffing that was funded through that, additional training, but there were also some existing staff and existing expenses that we could also claim. When that revenue goes away, some of this budget – like, some of the professional services – will decrease going forward, but it won’t go down dollar for dollar.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. Take me through the staffing positions, because if I’m looking at the right section, I’m only seeing a senior compliance officer, a regulatory officer, and then there are two compliance officers. I guess my question is: Is that the full complement of staffing positions that are responsible for doing the quality inspections on all of our overnight tourism operations in the province?

Stephen Mutch: Those positions are the permanent full-time positions. There are also additional seasonal positions. I believe in the spring when they’re trying to go out and inspect all the tourism operations, there is additional staff. There are an additional five seasonal tourism standard officers, and then there are two additional part-time seasonal fire inspectors as well.

M. MacFarlane: What were the first five that you mentioned? I heard the two fire inspectors. What were the first five positions that were additional part-time?

Stephen Mutch: There’s an additional five part-time seasonal tourism standards officers. Those would be the folks going out and doing inspections, I believe.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. I assume the four FTEs in the big book have been there before. Are these five plus the two fire inspectors new, further to QTS being dissolved and this work being done internally with the department?

Stephen Mutch: That’s my understanding, yes.

M. MacFarlane: How many rental accommodations will be inspected every year?

Stephen Mutch: That is a.... Oh, actually, I do have that. I didn’t think I had it, but I did.

M. MacFarlane: [Laughter] I thought I stumped you on that.

Hon. E. Hudson: It's a great stranger.

Stephen Mutch: There are 2,397 licensed operators, which was a 21 percent increase over 2024.

M. MacFarlane: Is that typical? All of those are inspected every year?

Chair: That might be more of a policy question, if you can try and keep it to the budget.

[2:45 p.m.]

M. MacFarlane: I'll assume that if they're licensed accommodations, they would be inspected. The stranger has already answered the previous question, so I guess the next question is: Is the work of these officers – and then the five plus the two that you mentioned earlier, are they proactively doing inspections, or is it complaint driven? To bring it back to the budget, Chair, is it sufficient?

Stephen Mutch: Yes, and it is an annual property inspection that everyone has to undergo. The full-time staff throughout the year would deal with complaints or noncompliance. Then, there's obviously the inspections and the licensing aspect of that.

M. MacFarlane: So, this is still new for the department to have brought this back in house. Is there intended to be some sort of high-level review or monitoring of the success of it? Because obviously, for many years, this work was done externally by QTS. The decision was made, for whatever reason, to bring it into the department.

I would think because of the recency of that decision and the importance of our tourism industry and reputation – I guess my question would be: Is it the intent of the department to do a formal evaluation of how year 1 has gone, and then re-evaluate going forward?

Stephen Mutch: I would say so, yeah. The first full year, as of June 30th – that'll be the first full cycle, and I think we're still trying to figure out the final budget numbers going forward. Once that first year is complete, we'll figure out the exact staffing and the dollars required for training.

We're still fine-tuning that, so I would anticipate – it's not necessarily budget related, but I would say that the intent would be to do a review of how things are going.

M. MacFarlane: Have the licensing fees changed?

Stephen Mutch: I don't believe they have, no. I think they've not increased.

M. MacFarlane: I believe that the licensing fees were sufficient to maintain QTS's operations, so is it the intention of the department that the fees that are being paid will cover the additional staff that's required to do this work?

Stephen Mutch: Yeah, my understanding is that there was no net new additional cost to the Province with the transition. It should equal about where we were before.

M. MacFarlane: I guess we'll see from the evaluation if that expectation was true.

The professional services line is a little different than what we see in some of them. Only about a third was spent. Can you take us through that line, as to how we landed on \$850,000 after only spending \$335,000?

Stephen Mutch: That was one of the lines last year that we weren't quite sure – because it was the first year we were taking over that service – what the amount was going to be going forward, so again, we've adjusted that a bit this year.

Next year, there is going to be – the estimate is \$700,000 for the final year of the CRM upgrades that are going to take place. Then, there's also an amount that will be a cost going forward, which is the cost for Granicus software, it's called. It's a software that scans online and helps us with finding any illegal tourism operations, and then we can go out and either bring them online, or they'll stop operating.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. Maybe a question just on the travel line, why we're looking – travel and training, sorry. Just to be clear, it is travel and training. Only spent a fraction of what was anticipated. Is that line mostly for training? I'm thinking of the new people coming in to do the inspections, or is it for travelling?

Hon. E. Hudson: So, you're looking at the budget estimate for '25-26 as compared to the budget forecast?

M. MacFarlane: Yes.

[2:50 p.m.]

E. Hudson: Okay. On that, it is lower than what had been anticipated because of the cost for own vehicle cost and in-province travel cost, due to a later start on bringing inspections in house.

M. MacFarlane: I guess the second part of the question I had was whether the \$120,000 we're budgeting is to do with continued training, or is it more on travel?

Hon. E. Hudson: The current year – as I understand it, it will include a full year of cost this year for inspection services, but budget has been reduced due to efficiencies that have been found due to better scheduling and the ability to schedule to a more efficient way, I would have to say.

M. MacFarlane: Just bouncing back – sorry to be bouncing back to the previous question I asked on professional services. Maybe you responded, Stephen, in your answer. The inspection services was \$177,870. That's less than what was anticipated to be spent in inspection services.

Stephen Mutch: That inspection services was actually – the department took over the inspection services July 1st, so that's the April to June payment for QTS, for their inspection services prior to us taking it over. That's what that is last year.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. Lastly, the salaries line – maybe you answered this as part of another question that I had, Stephen, but the salaries line is forecasted to be half of what was budgeted, and then we're budgeting \$700,000. I understand the federal contribution which offsets some of the costs, but can you explain why only half? Sorry if I missed it in your previous answer.

Stephen Mutch: No, that's okay. Again, last year, with the first full year, we weren't quite sure of the cost going forward. That's why you'll see it was a higher budget last year. That was budgeted for a full year start – our full year for the department managing the inspections. It was a delayed start, and it also ended up we

needed less staff than we initially thought. So, when we see the budget going forward – it's \$699,000 for this year. I think we'll end up a lot closer to that this year because, again, we're almost a year into it so we have a better idea of the staffing required.

M. MacFarlane: Can you explain a little bit why you say there you needed less staff than you originally thought? I mean, it's quite a discrepancy there, but I guess that's my question: Why would you determine that less staff were needed when the inspections still need to get done?

Stephen Mutch: It was sort of based on some estimates that QTS has provided. Again, we were budgeting for a full year of inspections, but we only had nine months. April to June would be a bit busier as well. There were a couple of factors there that led to the lower spend last year.

M. MacFarlane: That's all. Thanks.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Research and Engagement: 2,941,400

Shall it carry? Carried.

Tourism Marketing Communications

Visitor Services

“Appropriations provided for tourism information, travel counselling, and visitor information centre activities.” Administration: 68,000. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 30,000. Professional Services: 1,500. Salaries: 1,310,600. Travel and Training: 35,000.

Total Visitor Services: 1,445,100

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Chair.

Taking a look under salaries, it's a slight reduction but there is still a reduction. With the collective agreement increase, I'm wondering, with the reduction, does that mean that some of our tourist venues will be shutting down. Are there fewer staff?

[2:55 p.m.]

Stephen Mutch: No, that jump last year was really more to do with the new collective agreement. There was some retro pay in there as well. But I don't think there's any expected change to the staffing, and all the centres are open as per usual.

C. Simpson: Okay.

That's it for me. Thank you.

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

R. Henderson: That's not actually what I've heard. I've heard that Mount Pleasant – the staff has been reduced in duration; the same positions are there.

Is that the case, that there are less weeks for Mount Pleasant?

Stephen Mutch: I don't have that answer but I could find out.

Hon. E. Hudson: We'll bring that information back. Thanks.

R. Henderson: So, what is the status of the Mount Pleasant visitor information centre? It's sort of the gateway to western PEI, as the minister is well aware. There have been some changes there with the ownership of the building, and there are future plans of a solar park near them. I don't know if it would impact them.

Is there an intention to maintain the services at the Mount Pleasant visitor information centre moving forward?

Hon. E. Hudson: I would certainly anticipate that there would be. As the member is aware, with regard to the planned solar farm, it is the same ownership of the property as the visitor information centre.

R. Henderson: Yeah. Do we pay rent, then, to use that building?

Stephen Mutch: We don't have the rents within here, but TI could be paying that rent. I don't know that.

R. Henderson: Well, that would be good for the minister when he comes back on the floor with these other estimates; he could provide us an update at that time.

Thanks, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

The Mount Pleasant site might be the gateway to western PEI, but the Borden-Carleton site is the gateway to the province. So, my question is with respect to the Borden Visitor Information Centre. I have had some communications with – I forget which minister at the time; can't recall or keep track. Can you confirm the future of the Borden Visitor Information Centre as I understand there could be a lease coming up on its current location?

Stephen Mutch: I don't have any information on that.

Hon. E. Hudson: Yeah, we'll bring that back.

M. MacFarlane: So, as we sit here with the budgeted amounts before us, for the budget debate, minister, you're not aware of any changes to the funding arrangement for the Borden Visitor Information Centre.

Hon. E. Hudson: No, I'm not aware of any, but I do want to provide confirmation on that. That's why I say I'll bring that information back.

M. MacFarlane: I would appreciate you bringing that back, minister. It seems to come up more often now than it did before for me in the district.

How many visitor information centres are there in PEI?

Hon. E. Hudson: There are ones in Souris, Wood Islands, Charlottetown, Borden, and West Prince. The ones in Wood Islands, Borden, and Charlottetown remain open year-round.

M. MacFarlane: I'm sorry, just the last part – three of them are open year-round?

Hon. E. Hudson: That is correct – Wood Islands, Borden, and Charlottetown.

M. MacFarlane: Okay, that's all I have. Thanks.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Visitor Services: 1,445,100

Shall it carry? Carried.

Advertising and Public Relations

“Appropriations provided to market Prince Edward Island tourism in the areas of creative, production, advertising buy, web marketing, and consumer activations or promotions.”
Administration: 6,000. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 7,024,900. Professional Services: 987,600. Salaries: 519,900. Travel and Training: 15,000.

Total Advertising and Public Relations:
8,553,400

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

This is a bigger section. I guess I’m wondering if you can tell me where this money is being spent. I mean, the materials, supplies, and services is a big line: \$7 million. What’s included there, please?

Stephen Mutch: That is almost all in the advertising budget line.

M. MacFarlane: Okay, specific to...?

[3:00 p.m.]

Stephen Mutch: It’s specific to a variety of – just all the advertising that Tourism PEI buys through the year. The NHL contract is one of those. It could be advertising on buses in Toronto, it could be television advertisements, it could be *Globe and Mail* advertisements, it could be.... Just anything like that would fit in that line.

M. MacFarlane: How much money here is going towards the continuation of the NHL contract?

Stephen Mutch: For the current contract for this fiscal year, there is \$1.95 million on that line.

M. MacFarlane: When does that money get paid out? I think there are still two instalments in 2026. It does sound like the NHL sponsorship package is being continued through at least this fiscal year. I’m hearing \$1.95 million in this fiscal year being budgeted.

Hon. E. Hudson: The present partnership with the NHL, yes, expires the end of December.

That would be the existing signed agreement or contract.

M. MacFarlane: So, it’s been renewed for this third and final year?

Hon. E. Hudson: The original agreement, as I understand it, was for a three-year period. So, I wouldn’t say that it’s been renewed; it was part of the original agreement.

M. MacFarlane: So, the \$1.95 million, I take it, is the final instalment of this arrangement?

Stephen Mutch: Of that existing contract, yes.

M. MacFarlane: That contract has a renewal clause, I think. During the month of September or October, there’s a 30-day window to further extend it beyond December 2026. Will the contract be signed up to be extended during that window of time into future years?

Hon. E. Hudson: The NHL has to be informed by October 1st of this year if the Province has a desire to negotiate a new contract.

[Interjections]

Chair: Quiet.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Is it the intention, minister, to act before that date to renew the contract?

[Interjections]

Hon. E. Hudson: I’m sorry – if the member could repeat the question.

M. MacFarlane: Yeah, I know there’s lots of interest in the subject – from the minister who signed the contract, I’d note.

The question I had, minister, presently is: Will the government be acting before the deadline of October to renew the contract or extend it into another year?

Hon. E. Hudson: Well, at this point in time, I’ll be honest; as minister, I’m not going to sit here and say yes it’s definitely going to be renewed or no it’s not going to be renewed.

There is a firm – IMI – which is doing, I guess I would say, the metrics, the evaluation. That firm has been in place since 1971, so they certainly

have a history of doing this type of work. Until I see what that information is that is brought back, I'm not going to sit here and say yes it definitely will or no it definitely won't.

I think there are a number of factors, obviously, that have played into the tremendous growth that we've seen in tourism the last two years – record growth, record growth that's not seen in any other area of the country, any other provinces/territories. There are a number of factors, I'm sure, that contribute to that.

[3:05 p.m.]

At this point in time, I don't think – I shouldn't say I don't think. As a minister of this government, we're not going to break contracts, and this one presently extends through to the end of this year. With regard to renewal of it, and as I had mentioned before, October 1st of this year, we have to give indications to the NHL with regard to renegotiating or negotiating for future years. Until I have the metrics, the statistics from IMI, I'll be –

Chair: Hon. Leader of the Third Party, one more, and then I can put you back on the list.

[Laughter]

M. MacFarlane: Sure. I was enjoying that response though, Chair.

So, if there's a deadline, though, of October 1st or October 31st, minister, then government's going to have to indicate its intention to renew or extend into 2027, and there would have to be a cash payment. There would have to be money proffered to the NHL to get into future years. Is there money budgeted to do that or not?

Hon. E. Hudson: Just for clarity, October 1st of this year is not to renew, it's to look at negotiating a new contract, which I see as completely separate. You have a negotiation, see how those negotiations go, and then ultimately, there's a renewal or there's not a renewal.

M. MacFarlane: The fiscal year will take us into next spring. This is the budget that's going to get us a full year from now, and I do think it's a question that should be answered. Is there money available if the government decides, in its wisdom, to go into 2027 and beyond with this arrangement? Then, where's the money? You need money to do that. Or will it be a special warrant, I guess, minister?

Stephen Mutch: If it was renewed, then there's a \$7 million pot of advertising funding. It could be allocated towards a new contract if that's the choice. If that wasn't the choice, then it would be allocated towards advertising in a bus in Toronto, for example. So, there is some flexibility there within that pot.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you. I appreciate it.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Chair. That was my exact question, so I'm going to frame it a wee bit differently.

So, the \$7 million that's in there – is that money spoken for for advertisement this fiscal year?

Stephen Mutch: Not necessarily. They probably have some ideas of the plans for that funding, but as the year progresses and they want to target different... Probably for next spring, they want to have some money available to target different markets for next summer, depending on what the numbers look like from this summer.

I think as the year progresses, things change. Different markets change. So, yeah, there's flexibility there. It wouldn't all be spoken for, I guess, is the answer.

C. Simpson: The department must have a sense of the chunking over – just based on experience. In the first quarter, we would advertise this or that in this place or that place, and second quarter, and so forth.

Going back, then, to October and having to let the NHL know whether or not we're interested in beginning to negotiate, would that be for the next fiscal? Or with the contract ending in December, would that mean – should it be successful in going forward, if that's what you decide to do – that that funding would start coming in January? Then, that takes away from other things that could be done.

Stephen Mutch: Yeah. I think they would have a rough plan, I'm sure. I'm not involved in the day to day on that side, but they have a team that works on that. As an example, the payment for January in the old contract was \$550,000. So, of the \$7 million – again, if the contract was the exact same as the old contract, it would be \$550,000. So, it's not all \$2.5 million.

C. Simpson: It's not all up front.

Stephen Mutch: It's already – two-thirds of the year or three-quarters of the year is already gone.

C. Simpson: So, you have that from a previous year – this is where our moneys went, vis-à-vis advertising – and a potential to have a quasi-plan for this fiscal year.

Minister, are you able to table the plan for advertisement for last year and this year?

Hon. E. Hudson: Absolutely. I'll bring that back, and I think even look back a couple of years, because as I had mentioned, we've seen tremendous growth over the last two years; certainly, the rebound since COVID. But yes, we'll bring that back.

C. Simpson: Thank you.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you very much.

Minister, you mentioned that IMI is doing the study. How much is it costing us for that study?

[3:10 p.m.]

Stephen Mutch: That is built into the NHL contract.

G. McNeilly: So, that's part of it. When you signed up, the company was going to do a.... Is it a beginning, middle, and end kind of thing, or how does that...? And what are they studying? The effectiveness of it?

Stephen Mutch: Yeah, basically. Yeah.

G. McNeilly: When are we able to get that? Shouldn't that be something that you get before you decide if you're going to renew again?

Stephen Mutch: Yeah.

Hon. E. Hudson: Yes.

G. McNeilly: Just wondering, when is that going to be provided?

Hon. E. Hudson: Excellent question, really. As I had mentioned, we have to give the intent if we want to enter into a renegotiated contract by

October 1st. What I will do is I'll get the exact dates and bring them back, but obviously the information from IMI – we would require that in advance in order to review it, make the decision, again, with regard to an indication of renegotiation; I'm not saying re-signing, but renegotiating the contract.

G. McNeilly: And it's just the timing of it right now. We're heading into June, July, August. There's not much – if that doesn't come in, can you delay whatever course of action you're going to take? Because that's an important document, and I don't know if the minister knows when he's getting it, and that will surely affect the contract.

Hon. E. Hudson: No, and as I said, I appreciate the question. It is a good question. I'll bring that back for the member and for the Legislature, but it's a good point.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Advertising and Public Relations:
8,553,400

Shall it carry? Carried.

Media Relations/Editorial

“Appropriations provided for earned media relations and familiarization tour/hosting.”
Administration: 4,200. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 120,000. Professional Services: 20,000. Salaries: 226,500. Travel and Training: 10,000.

Total Media Relations/Editorial: 380,700

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Just looking, please, for a bit of an idea of what this division does. It simply says earned media relations and familiarization tour/hosting. Can you tell us in plain language what that means?

Stephen Mutch: This section would include bringing different types of media personalities here and building itineraries for them. They could write a story or do an article about PEI. That's one of them.

Then they also attend media marketplaces. That's where they would go and they would sort of chat to a whole bunch of different media folks

and they would try and get them to come to PEI and write stories about PEI.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Media Relations/Editorial: 380,700

Shall it carry? Carried.

Fulfillment

“Appropriations provided for literature distribution.” Administration: 110,900. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 4,900. Professional Services: 20,000. Salaries: 131,300. Travel and Training: 4,000.

Total Fulfillment: 271,100

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: What literature is distributed in this section? Are we talking like visitor information guides?

Stephen Mutch: Yeah, it could be. It could be maps. It could be specific marketing material. So, if you're in Alberta and you go online, you can request specific material, and we will mail you what you want.

M. MacFarlane: It used to be that the brochures or the visitor information guides would be made available at different tourism or retail outlets, not just visitor information centres but at private businesses that would have them on display in a pamphlet (Indistinct), a pamphlet rack. That's no longer the case, is it? We no longer make hard copy print materials of our visitor information guides available for private operators. Is that fair? Am I wrong on that?

[3:15 p.m.]

Stephen Mutch: There still would be a visitor guide. I think there's less in it as far as specific restaurants and accommodations, that type of thing, but there is still a visitor guide that's printed. I think businesses on PEI could probably request different literature and they could display it through this section. We would deliver it to them or mail it to them.

M. MacFarlane: The reason why my memory is triggered on this is that I had a constituent in Gateway Village reach out and tell me that they

were no longer eligible to receive the print copies of certain literature. I just assumed it was the guide that the Province would prepare. We still prepare that same guide, I assume. As you said, Stephen, we mail it out to other places, but are we sure that we make it available in sufficient quantities for tourism operators in our province?

Stephen Mutch: I'm not sure on that. I know the guide has – we still print it. We still print a lot of copies, but I don't have an answer to that.

Hon. E. Hudson: If I could, Chair, what we can do is bring back a listing of where the guides are supplied to, and certainly, we can have a sidebar, Leader of the Third Party, with regard to the constituent that brought that point or that concern forward to you after I table the information of where those guides are supplied to.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Fulfillment: 271,100

Shall it carry? Carried.

Publications

“Appropriations provided for the production and printing of publications and management of photo library and audio-visual services.” Administration: 1,300. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 92,000. Professional Services: 30,000. Salaries: 185,900.

Total Publications: 309,200

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Would this be the section, then, where the guide gets published and put together, manufactured, and the previous section is the distribution of it?

Stephen Mutch: Yeah, you're correct.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Publications: 309,200

Shall it carry? Carried.

Travel/Trade Sales

“Appropriations provided for travel/trade promotions and international development.” Administration: 15,500. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 250,000. Salaries: 219,000. Travel and Training: 15,000.

Total Travel and Trade Sales: 499,500

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: I’m just wondering if there are specific destinations or jurisdictions that are being targeted in this section.

Hon. E. Hudson: One of the destinations that the emphasis has decreased on is the Japanese market at the current time. For whatever reason, it did not rebound after COVID like some of the other markets, so there’s been a decrease in the emphasis in that market.

M. MacFarlane: So, that’s a decrease. Would the United States be an area where there might be an increase, as an example?

Stephen Mutch: This is a little bit in the United States from what I understand, but it would be mostly outside of North America. With the new flights coming into Halifax from Germany, Switzerland, France, Amsterdam, and Scotland, there was some more emphasis placed on those destinations last year. I believe folks participated in some different meetings and things there.

M. MacFarlane: Interestingly, in a section that’s promoting international development and travel/trade, we actually see quite a reduction – by half – on the travel side of it. How does the section intend to fulfill the mandate? It spent the budgeted amount last year – at least, it’s forecasted to – but now it’s being subject to a drop of 50 percent.

[3:20 p.m.]

Hon. E. Hudson: I appreciate where the Leader of the Third Party is coming from, but you look at the overall amount there. It’s \$15,000. It’s not like \$150,000, you know what I’m saying, member? But with regard to travel and training, one of the things: obviously, if you’re trying to be – staff – as efficient as possible, there may be some events that have been attended on a yearly basis previously; it could be every second year to increase that efficiency.

M. MacFarlane: My last question here is just with respect to our closest neighbours. It

provides for land transportation. People in the states can drive up here with their RVs and their campers. Is that, in fact, a target audience for this section and for the department as a whole?

Stephen Mutch: That New England market is one that they do target specifically through here, and then part of the whole tourism strategy is targeting that market as well, so this would help with that specific market.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Chair.

The Japanese market has been a longstanding group of people who travel to PEI, so to see that drop and to hear that drop – that’s unsettling, a wee bit; that was significant. Is there an emphasis placed back on trying to regain that market back, in Japan?

Hon. E. Hudson: It’s an excellent question. That is one of the markets that did not rebound. That does not mean that we don’t continue to have a certain amount of emphasis on it, but also, markets that we’ve seen growing and continue to grow – we want to certainly increase our emphasis there if we see the results of the dollars that are being spent there resulting in travel to PEI.

C. Simpson: Did we see a decrease in any of the other Asian markets to the province?

Stephen Mutch: We wouldn’t have that information. That was just one specific one where there will be less emphasis placed on that specific market this year. I’m not sure.... I wouldn’t have the information on the other Asian markets.

C. Simpson: Appreciated the minister’s comment that energies could be – won’t attend this trade show or whatever it is this year; go next. It’s decreased this year. Does that mean the intent is it’s back on for an increased effort back in Japan or other areas of Asia for next year?

Hon. E. Hudson: That could be a real possibility. I’m sure that the marketing staff at Tourism PEI continuously look at where the trends are, if they’re dropping, if they’re increasing. If we see one that has dropped that starts to increase, I would anticipate that, yes, staff would look at that, increase the efforts, the advertising efforts in that jurisdiction, that area.

C. Simpson: That would make good sense – the efforts that Canada, and I'll be asking later – in terms of the economic trade, that we'd be looking to Asia. The timing to do both would make good sense. I look forward to that.

Thank you, Chair.

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

R. Henderson: Minister, do we still have a representative in Japan that represented PEI tourism that kind of works with the travel agencies in Japan? I know during my time we did, and it seemed to be a very worthwhile endeavour.

Hon. E. Hudson: Okay, just for clarity: you mean, member, a full-time employee in Japan?

R. Henderson: I don't know about full-time but an employee in Japan, yes.

Stephen Mutch: Part of that decrease is her contract ended March 31st.

R. Henderson: Was that ended by the department, or she decided to end it by going somewhere else?

Stephen Mutch: I believe we just decided, because of the decrease in that market, we didn't feel like it was something for this year going forward. Again, it will be something that will be revisited in the future.

R. Henderson: That would seem to me that you're giving up on the market because I would look at the Japanese market as a pretty valuable market to – I know one location in my district is the Bideford Parsonage Museum, which had good numbers last year, and it gets a sizable visitation from Japan.

[3:25 p.m.]

In fact, that parsonage museum had a successful year last year. It balanced its budgets and books and is finally on a very sustainable path. This gives me some concern – to give up and end the contract on that. I would certainly say if you're not having somebody on the ground in Japan to promote Prince Edward Island, you're kind of missing out on potential opportunities because it was our second largest international customer prior to this information.

Hon. E. Hudson: It's a good observation, I think, though, that we have to look – as my stranger has said, that position ended this past March, just barely ended. So, the position has been there. We've seen a decrease. So, you have to look – where is the best place to put your bucks at right now? You look at the cost of airfare, you look at the impact, let's face it, of increased airline as a result of airline fuels and the like. That all is going to impact as well.

You look where the target marketplace has been and will continue to be – in the foreseeable future anyway. It's going to be the eastern seaboard, our Atlantic Province counterparts, and Quebec/Ontario. We have to look at where the visitors are coming from, where the growth is at, and target that area to increase that growth.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Total Travel/Trade Sales: 499,500

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Tourism Marketing Communications:
11,459,000

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Tourism PEI: 34,906,100

Shall it carry? Carried.

Minister, would you like to take a stranger on the floor?

Hon. C. Deagle: Yes, please.

Chair: Shall it be granted?

An Hon. Member: No.

[Laughter]

[Interjections]

Chair: Granted.

Welcome. Can you please state your name and title for Hansard?

Karen Stanley: Karen Stanley, director of finance for the Department of Health and Wellness.

Chair: Alright, hon. members, we're on page 96.

Departmental Management

Departmental Management

“Appropriations provided for operation of the office of the Minister and Deputy Minister, offices of the Assistant Deputy Ministers and centralized administrative functions for the department.” Administration: 43,700. Equipment: 16,700. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 53,400. Professional Services: 242,400. Salaries: 1,723,000. Travel and Training: 60,700. Grants: 4,200,000.

Total Departmental Management: 6,339,900

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West
Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Thanks. Welcome back, Karen. I’m glad you’re here.

I guess I’m going to start with, as we get started with this, the number that’s striking – I kind of think I know what’s happening here, but you don’t often see a grant line going from \$200,000-\$300,000 to \$4,200,000.

Can you tell me what that is and why that’s in corporate services?

Karen Stanley: That is the first year of the \$10 million commitment to the PCH foundation for their multi-use facility.

G. McNeilly: So that’s in a grant; why was it put in this area?

[3:30 p.m.]

Karen Stanley: Corporate services?

G. McNeilly: Yeah, this line.

Karen Stanley: I’ll be quite honest; I couldn’t think of a better place to put it.

G. McNeilly: So, you couldn’t think of a better – I really thought this money would have been maybe the money that came back from, potentially, the mental health alliance. That’s not in here at all?

Karen Stanley: No. To be honest, there will not be much money coming back from the mental health alliance because what we are doing is – we did receive a cheque from them, but all of that money will be deferred and used to honour

the commitments that were made under the grants from them. You won’t see any this year because we didn’t know that was going to be happening at the time of this, but it will basically be an in and an out in each year as we pay for it. But that’s in mental health and addictions.

G. McNeilly: Okay. That is in mental health and addictions, so that has nothing to do with this. Let’s get back to that number: \$4.2 million. That’s the start of the \$10 million PCH.... I have never seen a line like this. Why is it in the department and not Health PEI?

Karen Stanley: Because it’s a grant, and normally Health PEI doesn’t do a lot of grants. Most grants are actually run through the department.

G. McNeilly: I’m just thinking about other grants that I’ve seen, and in capital – wouldn’t that be a capital project? Why is it...?

Karen Stanley: It’s their capital project, but we’re not owning it, so it’s not our capital project. Capital items have to be items that we own, but this is something the PCH Foundation will own, so it’s a grant to them.

G. McNeilly: Okay. So, it’s the start of the \$10 million fund. What would that grant line have been like without that investment? How much is that investment, first?

Karen Stanley: \$4 million.

G. McNeilly: So, the grant line would have been about \$200,000 – well....

Karen Stanley: That’s correct. It would be a little bit of a reduction from prior years.

G. McNeilly: Yeah, okay. I might get back to that. I wasn’t actually expecting that in there, so it took me a little while to think about it but I’m understanding now, with the foundation and how that comes to be.

In here, under salaries, you have two assistant deputy ministers. We know that one – is that a secondment over to Health PEI? Was that position of assistant deputy minister backfilled?

Karen Stanley: Yes, it was a secondment to Health PEI, and no, it was not backfilled.

G. McNeilly: So, there's an open position for an assistant deputy minister. Who takes on that work that was being done?

Karen Stanley: The budget itself is set up as if she was still here because all of this happened after the budget was prepared, so her salary dollars are still in here and everything still has her name on it because it is a secondment for a short period of time. My understanding is that she will be returning to her position once a new CEO is found.

G. McNeilly: I'm not going to ask when that's going to happen, but... So, just being a secondment – and backfilled... Because that's an important position, assistant deputy minister of mental health and addictions.

Karen Stanley: The work of that particular person was being distributed within other people. The other ADM has taken on quite a bit of the work, and then the other ADMs work has been distributed to an executive director, to myself... It's been spread out to try to make do, but everyone is aware this is a short-term measure and not sustainable on a longer term.

G. McNeilly: Okay, perfect. Under salaries, too, I'm seeing a lot of salaries throughout the budget go up because of the negotiations, but this one is kind of dropping. Does that mean that there are unfilled positions besides that one in this section?

Karen Stanley: That is actually a fully funded position, so you wouldn't see a drop related to that. In this section last year, we had funding for an analytical team, and they're weren't being utilized, so when one of them had left, we had decided to better reallocate the funds. The funds actually went – some of them stayed her for casual for other work, some of them actually went to mental health and addictions for a director.

[3:35 p.m.]

G. McNeilly: Okay, so that would have been... That would have been a couple of people in that position? I don't see it here in the – so, in this budget, you would have taken it out?

Karen Stanley: No, because they're weren't permanent positions; they were temporary positions. The list that you're looking at is only permanent positions.

G. McNeilly: Okay, perfect. Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair, and welcome back, Karen, to the floor, and minister, of course.

I'm flipping back a page to page 95, where we see some revenue discussion on there. I wonder if you could explain to me how this department generates revenue and why we're looking at about \$16 million less than last year's budget.

Karen Stanley: Most of what's in here is federal revenue.

Hon. C. Deagle: So, federal cuts.

M. MacFarlane: Let the stranger answer, please, minister. [Laughter]

Karen Stanley: They're not cuts; they were agreements which have expired. So, the overall revenue – most of it is actually in this section because there is something that's called the Working Together agreement that we have signed, and that actually is going until – we're doing seven more years, so 2031-32. So, that agreement is continuing on, and it's worth about \$30 million a year.

M. MacFarlane: So, this was anticipated and known going into the budget drafting that we would be down about \$16 million or whatever that –

Karen Stanley: That's correct. That was not a surprise. We knew that going into it.

M. MacFarlane: Okay.

Hon. C. Deagle: (Indistinct) I would say that the federal government has a habit of coming in and saying, "We'll help fund a program" to start it and then backing out whenever the agreement is finished. So, you can call them reductions, cuts, whatever you want to call it, but the reality is if we want to continue to offer these programs, the provincial government will have to step in and continue to fund. It's no different than the one in education that the member has been asking about. Their funding has stayed at the same level, but the cost has continued to rise, and we have to eat those costs.

So, it looks good when you come in for the shiny announcement and everyone gets their

picture, but when the time comes and they back out.... I met with the federal minister. We hope to work to extend those agreements. She said that won't be happening, and the same with the pharmacare; that won't be continuing. So, it is concerning, and with budget pressures, we have to absorb those entire costs.

M. MacFarlane: So, just so I'm clear on what we're talking about, I think this was the issue that was raised in Question Period before, if it's the same thing. Were those not five-year federal funded programs that had a five-year agreement?

Karen Stanley: That's correct.

M. MacFarlane: So, we knew five years ago that that money was coming to the end of its lifespan, so as, Karen, you said, there was no surprise; we knew the cuts were coming.

Karen Stanley: No, and with the improving affordable access to prescription drugs – we refer to it as the IAAPD; that's the one that ended on March 31st, 2026 – the Province has picked up all of those costs. There were no changes to the programs because of that. We have been very clear from the day we signed the contract that there was an end date.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. So, was there a need to reallocate money from elsewhere within the department to make up the federal shortfall on those programs?

Karen Stanley: Not on that particular program, no.

M. MacFarlane: What about the other ones? Were there not four different – five programs? Six?

Karen Stanley: There are six programs, but they're not all ending last year. So, as they come into play, we will deal with them at that time: evaluate the programs, what we want to continue, what we don't, and then kind of adjust our course accordingly.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you for the clarification on that. It's easier to have this discussion here than perhaps in Question Period. I appreciate the clarity around it and the fact that the services under the programs or the programs that were funded are going to be able to be continued, because I think people came to benefit from those programs.

Karen Stanley: With the IAAPD, absolutely, and they are continuing without change.

M. MacFarlane: So, there's a line in the big book, and it appears in a number of places. I'll have a few questions if you can help explain it to me. It's the budget/variance from forecast.

[3:40 p.m.]

Karen Stanley: Yes, when it's for the '25-26, that is a forecast. And what it is, is that in the numbers that we give you in the breakdown of the actual expenditures, they are until February 28th. We actually do a lot of our grants and our professional fees – they come into play in March. So, it is funding for things that we have not received the bills for yet.

M. MacFarlane: In all cases, it just seems to be a number pulled out to achieve a balance. Maybe that's not true in all cases. And you can point me –

Karen Stanley: Oh, it is.

M. MacFarlane: So, it's just a number.

Karen Stanley: Yes, because the forecast is where we think we're going to be at the end of the year based on our actual expenditures plus what we're planning to come in. It will always be the difference between the forecast and the actuals.

M. MacFarlane: Does that get more accurately reconciled at some point?

Karen Stanley: Oh, absolutely. The public accounts will have the correct number. It's just based on what we knew at the time.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you for that clarity, Karen, on the \$4 million. Is that a one-time installment or will this be a multi-year installment?

Karen Stanley: It's a three-year agreement: \$4 million this year, \$4 million next year, and \$2 million the year after.

C. Simpson: Can you remind us again what that \$10 million is for?

Karen Stanley: It's for the construction of a multi-use facility near the PCH that the PCH Foundation is putting in place.

C. Simpson: Is that cost-shared with the foundation?

Karen Stanley: I know the federal government has contributed some funds to it. We have. I would assume between the two of them, we would probably be covering off the majority of it, but the foundation would pick up any difference.

C. Simpson: In the minister's and deputy minister's office – please understand, this isn't a criticism of the staff, it's just trying to understand – there are two assistant deputy ministers. One is on leave and the duties have been dispersed amongst others on a short term.

Can you remind us of the titles? Deputy minister of what?

Karen Stanley: There is one deputy minister of primary care. If you're looking at the estimates book, they would cover off community health and policy and pharmacy services. That's the primary care. They cover off those two divisions.

Then the deputy minister of mental health and addictions covers off workforce development, mental health and addictions, and health innovation, and then Dr. Morrison as Chief Public Health Officer covers off the Chief Public Health Office.

Our department is kind of divided into three, and each of those three people has their areas.

C. Simpson: Again, not a criticism of the positions, but just in times of hardship.... Not all departments have two ADMs.

Karen Stanley: Absolutely. Because of the work that we do and how closely we work with Health PEI, as we are learning very much right now with one being gone, there is workload for that many people – the two ADMs plus the Chief Public Health Officer.

C. Simpson: There could be opportunity to learn, too, where there might be duplication between the work here and the work at Health PEI as well.

Karen Stanley: Absolutely. We're always looking at that to make sure that we're not doing each other's work and that the work that we're doing is complementing each other.

C. Simpson: That same train of thought is going into the senior advisor. Can you explain the difference between two senior advisors? Although one teases out strategic communications.

Karen Stanley: Yes. One of the senior advisors, he's actually embedded in Health PEI.

C. Simpson: Embedded but not on staff at Health PEI.

Karen Stanley: Correct. Part of that is because this has been an individual who has been part of the senior compensation plan, who has been part of the government pension plan for a long time. So that they would not have that disruption in their benefits, we put him on secondment to Health PEI, but his salary and budget still remain in ours. If his secondment ends, he can come back over here.

[3:45 p.m.]

C. Simpson: Does that mean that the work that this person was doing while in the minister's and deputy minister's office has been redistributed as well?

Karen Stanley: He was actually in corporate services, and that was because he would go to different areas. This particular individual was instrumental during COVID in getting the checkpoints up and running in Borden and at the airport. He has a lot of skills, so we just move him to wherever he needs to go in the department. That's why he's in corporate services, because it's centralized.

C. Simpson: And so, that would be the senior advisor for strategic communications. What's the difference in that role?

Karen Stanley: That particular individual is similar to a communications officer but different. Again, it's in corporate services because she works for all of the different areas. She doesn't focus on one particular division or one area. She also does quite a bit of work with the mental health and addictions campus when they require it. That's kind of why they're in here.

C. Simpson: That makes sense. That's where I was going: there would be a communications officer in here somewhere. But to work with Health PEI out of the minister's office, would Health PEI – and I know we're getting there – not have a budget for their own strategic communications?

Karen Stanley: She does not do work with Health PEI. She does work in collaboration with them. It's just the other strategic advisor that does work with Health PEI right now.

C. Simpson: But if they're working on strategic communications with – did you say the –

Karen Stanley: Mental health and addictions campus.

C. Simpson: The campus. But that would be Health PEI.

Karen Stanley: No, the campus is actually a departmental project.

C. Simpson: Okay. Thank you, Chair.

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

G. McNeilly: Thanks very much. I appreciate that.

Just one more question on the \$10 million, the grant line, or the \$4 million this year. If that's the model for the PCH – and we're doing something similar for the QEH with a build here?

Karen Stanley: That's different. We are going to own that building.

G. McNeilly: I could ask why you're not owning one and (Indistinct) owning the other, but it just seems like –

Karen Stanley: The building in Summerside was an initiative of the PCH Foundation, so we are supporting them.

G. McNeilly: And that was my question as we got – I wasn't thinking that type of way when you brought that up, but I appreciate it.

In the big book, under legal services, I just want to ask a few questions on the physician services agreement. The actual spend until February 28th

was \$254,000 for legal fees about the physician services agreement.

Karen Stanley: I'm going to clarify. It's under legal fees because we paid the law firm, but they actually outsource a lot of data people. They paid for them and then billed us. It goes under the legal fees because we paid the law firm, but it was for more than just legal fees. But it was for the lawyers who acted as our spokesperson during the negotiations with the Medical Society for the memorandum.

G. McNeilly: Like you just said, the memorandum – was that the money just for the MOA, or was that –

Karen Stanley: That's correct.

G. McNeilly: That's an awful lot for an MOA that has been put on pause. It's just on pause. So, we really spent almost \$250,000 for legal fees, because I saw the legal fees for the other associations. You think this is what you fully expected to pay, or was this a little bit more for a paused document with physicians?

Karen Stanley: Honestly, considering the time that was put into this and the additional resources like the analytics and also any travel – because some of the specialists that we had to bring in, particularly for the analytics, were from out-of-province – this number is not out of line.

G. McNeilly: Do you find it out of line that we don't have an agreement? Do you think it's like –

Karen Stanley: That is not for me to make a determination.

Chair: The hon. Charlottetown-West Royalty, come on. (Indistinct)

G. McNeilly: [Laughter] I wanted to ask the minister, but we're just in conversation here.

[3:50 p.m.]

Now we're in a pause. We need to get that signed, and I appreciate the minister talking about it last week in Question Period. What happens now? Are we looking at another \$250,000 in the next year? What's the plan of attack, I guess, in the budget on a budget line for this line?

Karen Stanley: From a budget perspective, it's my understanding that the work that needs to be done will not require a negotiation. It can be done between Health PEI, the department, and the Med Society directly, and we will not need third-party negotiators.

G. McNeilly: So, then, probably it can all be done without any type of outside external – we've got it on record. There will be no outside legal firms or....

Karen Stanley: I can't guarantee that, but that is the goal or intention at this point in time.

G. McNeilly: Okay. So, when...? I don't know if we can....

Karen Stanley: And it may or not even be in our budget. Some of it could be in our budget, some of it in Health PEI's budget. And as you can see, we do have an allowance for some professional fees, so if we needed to use it, we would.

G. McNeilly: I haven't really looked at the Health PEI one yet about this. So, we're looking at.... I just would like to know a timeframe, if we don't need legal help.... We need this agreement signed. It's affecting us across the country with recruiting; it's clearly shown. What is the goal of the department to make sure that we have a signed deal with physicians in Prince Edward Island as early as possible, and what is that date?

Hon. C. Deagle: That's probably a good question for Question Period.

Chair: Can you put that into a budget question, hon. Member from Charlottetown-West
Royalty?

G. McNeilly: We spent \$250,000 to pause an agreement. It didn't get us anywhere except not being able to recruit doctors. How much is the anticipated cost for budget '26-27 and moving forward for a physician services agreement, minister?

Hon. C. Deagle: I think my stranger answered that question just before this.

Karen Stanley: We have funds available if we require them.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

Just coming back to where I left off in my last round of questioning on that funny line, that Budget/Variance from Forecast. I don't think we see that in the other departments. How come the Department of Health uses that to balance and zero out?

Karen Stanley: I always have, and no one has asked me to change it.

[Laughter]

Karen Stanley: I'm sorry. I give honest answers.

M. MacFarlane: That's great. So, do you suggest that it's the better way of doing it that should be adopted by the other departments?

Karen Stanley: I can't say. Their way works for them; this works for me. Consistency would be nice, yes.

M. MacFarlane: I agree. Some of the – I call them lineouts; I don't want to call them that. The adjustments are large amounts of money – really large amounts of money.

Karen Stanley: Absolutely, and in some cases they're large amounts of money because we were hoping to get things done – we may or may not have actually gotten them done, but we were hoping to get things done – or we were working on things and we were hoping to get the bills in March.

As you said, it says Budget/Variance from Forecast. The budget part is for the '26-27, and what that is is that when we have a pot of money, sometimes we have it allocated. Particularly with the grants, if we have a multi-year contract and we know that we're giving an organization a certain amount of money, we will put it there. But if it's not specifically allocated, then it will go just to the budget because it can be used for whatever we need it to be used for.

M. MacFarlane: But I guess we don't know that, looking at the line, because the line is consistent, the same. We don't know if that money is going to be needed, further to your answer – would you know?

Karen Stanley: What I know is that we have it if we need it. If we knew what it was for, we would have listed it on the list – if we had a

multi-year agreement and we knew we would have to commit to something. But if we don't know, all we know is that we may not know who might be putting a grant in or who we might be giving professional services to, but we do know that we have the funds to do that.

M. MacFarlane: Okay, I'm going to move on from that because that's complicated.

The next question I have is on the Health PEI and PEI DHW alignment workshop. Could you tell us a little bit about what that almost \$9,000 was for, what it accomplished?

[3:55 p.m.]

Karen Stanley: That was a workshop that was held in the fall of 2025, and it was to just get the two organizations together so that – as I had mentioned before, we try to work complementary to each other and not do each other's work, so we had engaged a facilitator to look at what each of us do and bring us each together just to ensure that we were doing just what I said – complementing each other and not duplicating work.

M. MacFarlane: Were there any duplication or redundancies identified through this process?

Karen Stanley: No, not that I'm aware of, but there may have been some lines where we were doing something, and they should have been doing it or vice versa. It just helped us clarify that.

M. MacFarlane: Is that initiative – you called it a workshop – but is that something that would be intended to proceed annually or semi-regularly?

Karen Stanley: We are hoping that in this year that we will be able to do it without the help of the facilitator. However, there are funds available if we do end up requiring a facilitator.

M. MacFarlane: No, I think there could be value in that and I know that the minister has indicated that there could be a review of Health PEI. I don't know if that, sort of, we're talking apples and oranges on this, perhaps, but is there funding in the section for that? I guess that would perhaps – would that come in Health PEI or minister, you announced that there could be a review of Health PEI? Would funding for that be in department or would that be in –

Karen Stanley: Health PEI.

M. MacFarlane: It would be in Health PEI, okay.

The travel was overspent by about \$18,000. What was that about for travel? I don't see any increase for travel and training in this year.

Karen Stanley: Last year, the deputy minister and the assistant deputy minister both attended the International Council of Nurses Congress in Helsinki, Finland. Those are just more expensive than trips just because they're international. There is nothing like that planned this year so we put the travel back to normal.

M. MacFarlane: I did see that somewhere here. I think it was \$10,000 for one person and you add up the people who went, it was big item, it was a big trip to Helsinki.

Karen Stanley: That's correct.

M. MacFarlane: Was there some determined value and takeaways from that? I don't know, was it a hiring – was it for hiring and recruitment?

Karen Stanley: Honestly, I would have to find out what the purpose was. I do know that UPEI attended. I believe people from the College of Registered Nurses attended. It was a large conference that there were representatives from PEI that went to from different parts of the nursing faculty.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Chair.

Karen, you may have already answered this and my apologies if you have, but when you pull the \$4 million out of grants, the grant budget line is down by just over \$46,000, and then down again from the forecast in the estimate, there's a variation there. But have there been cuts to grants?

Karen Stanley: I wouldn't call them cuts, but there have been some fiscal austerity measures put in place. We're not cutting someone's grants because these were definitely not ones that we had multi-year contracts for, these were ones that if someone applied for them. One of the grants was the College of RNs and Midwives, support for the creation of the new college for

RNs and LPNs. That would not be a multi-year agreement. That happened last year so we wouldn't need that money for next year, so we'll just be giving out less grants this year.

C. Simpson: Thank you for that, Karen. In taking a look at that, would the \$26,000, roughly, be 100 percent found in – it was a one-time grant – or will there be anybody not receiving a grant this year who did last year?

Karen Stanley: In this particular area – and actually overall, in our department, with the exception, obviously, of the mental health and addictions and Mental Well-Being Alliance – we have had no grant cuts to specific organizations.

C. Simpson: Grants will be up – it's more of a general question – the grants are hidden throughout, not hidden, but they're in each of the different areas throughout, so the Mental Health Alliance, where would that be found again?

Karen Stanley: Mental health and addictions.

C. Simpson: Okay, thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

[4:00 p.m.]

Chair: Alright members, we've exhausted our time.

Hon. C. Deagle: 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. B. Trivers in the chair]

M. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having under consideration the grant of supply to His Majesty, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Motions Other Than Government

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time, I would like to call back Motion No. 3 to the floor.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Deputy Clerk: Motion No. 3, "Expand mental health supports for youth," has been read and debate was adjourned by the hon. Minister of Education and Early Years.

Speaker: I'd like to call upon the hon. Minister of Education and Early Years to continue debate.

Hon. R. Croucher: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, when this motion was on the floor, I took the floor and I was a little disappointed, maybe a little angry at a statement that was made on the other side of the House. I stood and I talked about trauma.

The first thing I want to acknowledge is that the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park had made that statement, and she did apologize in her debate. She did apologize again personally to me. I really appreciate that. I know there are a lot of things that get said in here in the heat of the moment, and I think that was one of them.

I spoke a little bit about the trauma that I endured throughout my life personally – losing my mother at a young age, then my father at a young age, and my brother, and two of my best friends to cancer. I have endured my share of trauma personally, and professionally as a paramedic, a firefighter, a funeral director, and an embalmer. I've walked through a lot of trauma there as well, personally, and assisted a lot of people in their trauma – a lot of events that I won't speak about here today but that I carry with me every day.

I still drive by places on the highway or by a house or a certain landmark, and that comes right back. That's part of being a first responder. I have so much respect – I've done this job, firefighter for 20 years, paramedic for 15-ish – for any of those first responders that have decades and decades of service and what they see and deal with in their jobs. I have the utmost respect for anyone that can make a career out of helping people and dealing with that kind of thing.

[4:05 p.m.]

What do I know about trauma? I've got a considerable amount of education in trauma-informed care, both as a paramedic and, more so, as the funeral director and embalmer. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross – I've studied her and the five stages of grief. There was a lot of trauma-informed care as part of that training, probably more so in that role than I did in paramedicine.

I was going to spend a lot of time talking about that, but I think we're past that, and like I said, the member – I appreciated her apology to me. So, I've moved on from that.

But what I want to focus on a little bit in this motion, "Expanding mental health supports for youth" – it's a great motion. I support it wholeheartedly. It talks about the challenges that our youth face – anxiety, depression, and the other mental health challenges. I want to talk about the bullying aspect of that and the challenges that our youth face with bullying in all its forms, whether it's physical, verbal, emotional, or online with the cyberbullying. It's no secret, I guess, that it's something that's near and dear to my heart, having endured the pain of the repercussions of cyberbullying in our world today.

I'm so glad that my kids are grown up and now adults and don't have to deal with some of the pressures that our youth face. They dealt with it to a certain degree in their childhood. I guess we all dealt with it, but today, it's so much more prevalent.

I don't know how to fix it. We're trying. We're doing what we can, and I know other members in this House are as well, but we can't get a handle on it.

I say so many times that when I finish my time in politics, I won't have Facebook. I won't have Instagram. I won't have Snapchat. I won't have any of those things because the bullying that occurs on those platforms to people of all ages – and I don't think there's anyone in this House that wouldn't agree with me that we experience a degree of that in our roles here every day online.

But our youth are experiencing it even more. I talked about years ago – I look around the room at some of you guys that are my vintage – that, you know, there was bullying in our school system, there was bullying in our society, but you got to leave it at the school, or behind the Black Rafter, or wherever it happened to be.

You went home and you were surrounded by the love of your family and people that supported you through it all. You had that safe place. We don't have that anymore. It follows us home. It follows us home as adults, so just imagine what it's doing to kids.

I don't have TikTok. I don't have – well, I quit using Twitter, or X, for that very reason. Kids today on all of these platforms, and Meta – it just boggles my mind the amount of hate that's on our online platforms, and the bullying, and we can't convince those platforms like Meta to do their part.

I guess where I'm going with that is I just wanted to talk a little bit about the bullying that happens and the role that we have to play. People look at us as leaders, people look at us as role models – and we're as guilty of it, in some ways, right inside the rail of this House.

I think, for me, last week just kind of highlighted that we have to do better as well. We always talk about how when we know better, we do better. I guess I just want to acknowledge that the things that we say in here, whether it's in anger or just off the cuff – you can't take those words back. They're there. Apologies are great, but I think that as leaders, we need to hold ourselves to higher standards and do better.

[4:10 p.m.]

So, back to this motion. Our youth are – there's no question; they're struggling with more anxiety, more depression, more of those mental health challenges because of the pressures that they're under and because of social media, and because there's no reprieve. They can't get that reset when they go home in the evening, potentially, when they're being bullied.

In the motion, it states that at least 33 percent of students surveyed feel nervous, anxious, or on edge most days. I think, in here, we all have the same goal: to make society better. It doesn't matter which party that we represent. I think we all share that same goal. We need to continue to work on reducing those stressors, and it's through conversations like this. It's through healthy debate that we have in here. It's through some of the bills and motions that get passed in here. It's through working together on some of these challenges.

That's one thing that I really hope that we learn – that we collaborate more – because it doesn't

matter what party you represent; there are good ideas. We all have good ideas. I think we need to come together and talk about these things long after this legislative session is over and the cameras go out and the media goes home. I think that's where more of the good work can occur. I certainly, as the Minister of Education, welcome any of the ideas that come from anyone in this House and would be happy to sit down and talk about the ways that we can do better because I'm sure that there are some good ideas that can be had and worked on.

Anyway, I was going to talk longer on this, but I just wanted to stand and talk a little bit about more the long-term effects of bullying and its effect on the mental health of our students – and really, all of us here as Islanders.

The final line: "Therefore be it resolved that this Legislative Assembly calls on the Government of Prince Edward Island to increase funding for youth mental health services, including school-based counsellors and community programs, and to table a report annually to the Legislative Assembly on access, staffing levels, and outcomes for students." I certainly think that's something that we can work on.

I know, jointly with Social Development and Seniors, Health, and Education, we've invested. There's no limit to what we can invest in this area, and I think that we have to keep focusing on youth mental health. A report annually certainly is a way to track some of the work that we're doing; no question about it.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if anybody else wants to speak to this motion or not, but I thank you for the opportunity to stand and talk a little bit about it. I certainly will be supporting this motion.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

T. DesRoches: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to take a second and rise and I wanted to thank the members for bringing this motion, and the previous member for speaking to it.

This is one that I see all too often. With a 16-year-old daughter, it's so much different from when I went through school. The technology

now – the last member just spoke on social media and all that. It's unbelievable how students use social media now to attack each other. It's just something that – there's got to be a way that it can get reeled in.

[4:15 p.m.]

Any help with mental health of young kids is something that has to be done. There's never too little. Any little bit will help. It's funny, like the member said, back when he was younger in school, you solved your problems a different way. I look back and I have lots of stories about when I was younger in school and how we solved problems back then. That just doesn't fly this day and age, and I'm glad that it doesn't. But the way that social media has taken over – it's a part of every kid's life.

You see every kid on their phone. I sit in front of the school – I'll pick my daughter up for dinner some days, or I'll pick my daughter up after school – and half the time you watch the kids come out and you don't know which kids they are because they all got their heads down and they're going with their phone. They don't even look up. It's amazing. As soon as they get out of that school, they're on their devices and they're on social media. Not all of it is in a bad way; some of it's in a good way. But a lot of it is attacking.

For the members to bring this forward to expand the mental health supports for youth, I applaud them for it. It's a great motion. I don't ever think we can do enough to help our youth. It's not just through the social media, it's the trauma and that that some of the youth see.

I know, being a first responder, when you go to incidents that involve the young kids and all that.... We're very fortunate in Summerside. We have a pastor on our fire department who goes to every call, and when we have a call with young kids, or car accidents, fires, death, anything – he's there. Like I say, we're fortunate because he will sit at a scene for two, three hours after we leave to make sure that the youth, the families, the adults – they have a little bit of comfort. That's something that really, really plays on a person.

A debriefing for the first responders is one thing, but for those families and the youth to have a debriefing through that, through a pastor like we have with our fire department, is a blessing. But if we can go one step further and have more

supports for them through the education system, through mental health awareness campaigns – whatever it is. There's never enough.

I just wanted to rise and thank the members for bringing this. I definitely will be in support of it.

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

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

I, too, wanted to rise today to talk about this motion and to support. I certainly think this topic is really important and it certainly is especially important in our home with a 14-year-old, almost 15, living in a world that is so different from the world I lived in at 14/15 when it comes to social media.

I certainly think some of the elements at play, when it comes to – and I'm not gender-basing here. I just know from the perspective of having a girl, and a teenage girl, some of the things that happen certainly do resonate with me. I do remember feeling left out if somebody has a group of girls over for a sleepover and I don't get invited but I don't hear about it until Monday. Well, now what happens is a picture gets sent to you to promote and show where they are, and you're not there. I can completely understand the change and the heartache and how that feels. Certainly, as a mom, it feels devastating when it happens.

What I think is really important too – and I love that we're having these conversations – is: how do we get a little bit even more in front of it? How do we help, within our school system or in our communities or in our homes, build self-confidence and build an ability to have your voice? How do we get you there so that when those things do happen, it doesn't put you to the bottom of their bucket when they've got nothing left in it?

For me, I've been working a lot on that with our daughter – to empower her to be who she is. Talk about your strengths. Be with your friends. Know who your friends are. Include. Don't leave somebody out because it's not fun just to leave somebody out. That's not a fun activity. Certainly, we're working hard on that. Celebrating your successes and dusting off when you have failures – it doesn't mean that's it for you.

We do a lot of that, but it is really important at this stage of their life when they are going to the junior high, leading into junior high and going into high school, and then a little later into their adult years. I do believe that they will use all of these elements to help them work through moments that they feel anxious and such.

I certainly don't discount that anxiety and depression is real. Sometimes, all of the work you could do leading up, when they're growing up, still doesn't protect them from those experiences. We just need to have those supports there in place of them.

[4:20 p.m.]

What I would say is one of the greatest things – and I didn't know who this individual was at school, but I was hearing about Miss Redmond at Birchwood, and “We have lunch with Miss Redmond every day.” I was like: “All of you do? Who is Miss Redmond?” She's the youth worker there. I was like, “Maybe she wants to go and have lunch on her own sometimes,” but she made such an impact on our daughter and her friends that they're comfortable enough to talk about things that are happening within school, some of their fears, some of the things that happen within their group, and maybe stuff they're experiencing outside of school.

Those relationships are really important and key to have someone to be able to confide in. She has done that for this group of girls. I know that they are going to miss her. I think that she may miss them a little, too, and her lunchmates.

Just off of that, I do think that how we support and how we grow the supports in this is about collectively working together with our schools, with our communities, with our health system. There is a collective group of people that really need to come together to ensure that when we're moving our youth through life that we're able to help them do that successfully and when they're feeling anxious, that we have supports there to help them navigate that. That would be my hope going forward for the future.

Thank you very much for listening. I look forward to hearing more.

Speaker: I'm going to go back to the mover to close debate, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for speaking about the situations, both of the ministers over there and the Member from Summerside, and everybody else who's spoken about this motion. Again, it's expanding mental health supports for youth.

I think each one of us took a turn speaking about how we don't know what the kids are facing right now. If we, ourselves, are caught up in our own phones and technology and aren't there to – we need to signal to anybody who is on technology right now. But if we're not able to put that down when our kids need us, we might lose that connection when they need us the most.

What I've heard lately, too, is that it's happening so fast – changes in kids are happening so fast, on a weekly basis. They're one day presenting like this and then maybe an influence somewhere is there; they can end up with struggles or being influenced. That's very scary. We have to make sure that we're doing everything in here possible to make sure that the supports are there for youth and when they're struggling.

It's something interesting. I've been to the same schools. I've been to the school that the minister refers to that her daughter is at, at Birchwood, to do some fitness – I went to wellness day. I'll go in there.... So, it's needed. I don't really have a reference point other than I've been doing it for 12 or 13 years, so I see the different generations.

Going into junior highs used to be – and when you'd go in and deal with grade 7 it would just be a complete, complete – it was so incredible. The energy was – it just spread around. And then grade 8s struggled. They struggle with the socialness of it. Grade 9s – if you have the right leaders in that grade 9 class, they'll do it.

Now, it's fear first. It's harder to get people involved. Maybe I'm getting older and I can move, but it's – I'm getting real old, but....

[Interjection]

G. McNeilly: I can't jump around, but –

[Laughter]

G. McNeilly: I need a lot of stuff.

But what I noticed this time is that the kids, some of them – it was so different for them that they were very close to each other, and they wouldn't move in a certain group. There were a few kids that would maybe jump around a little bit and others that wouldn't. It was disjointed. I didn't see a pattern. It's just one little analogy there, but I'm worried about that.

Actually, with Birchwood, I kind of stopped everybody and said, "Look, I'm only here for 20 minutes. Why don't we just try to have some fun?" They let go after that. They let go, but they needed permission to do that. It's those type of things that, when you're looking at it from the surface, you're like, it is getting hard for children. It is getting hard, and we've got to support them any way we can with the youth growing up, and it starts early.

[4:25 p.m.]

This motion specifically says to report back to the Legislature Assembly because I really think there has been some good programs done both with the federal government and the provincial government around this topic. I mean, there's been some struggles with the mobile mental health unit, but that's an important thing – 211, they can call or they can text. The Kids Help Phone – the services are up right now. But they need to be able to reach out to those places and know those are there.

The Department of Health and Wellness has the wellness coordinators in each of the schools. We saw that that was supported by the federal government. I'm worried about the funding, along with the minister. I'm worried about the funding for that because it's very important.

Social Development takes care of the families. When the adults are struggling, the kids are there. They did a lot with kids in the system, and – I'm showing you education. They're in education, so you have to work with the wellness coordinators that are provided to you from the Department of Health.

Then, you have – just recently, the Premier just re-established his Youth Council. So, all these things – the Child Advocate has 10 or 12 people that he consults with.

Why I'm asking to have all these groups come together and report back to the Legislative Assembly as one is so we know what's happening, and so that the ministers in charge

know what's happening along the way because we're losing some coordination. With everybody trying to work hard at this, there might be a little bit of disjointedness, and it might look like a winter wellness day session.

I don't want that to happen. I want it to be coordinated. I want to be able to see what's happening for the students, because we have to come together and figure it out. You see what influence the Premier of Manitoba had by coming out and just – "This is what we're going to do. This is what we're taking a stand on, and this is a big issue for our people." I think that we need leadership in this direction, and we need to coordinate the services to come together as one because the Compass surveys are there.

I know the Minister of Health looked at a few options about – last week, he made some announcements about work towards cannabis and nicotine products, but we also have to look at alcohol as well. We have an alcohol strategy that – I think it might be completed. We need to be able to look at that, and to figure out how we make changes for our youth in Prince Edward Island. Alcohol has consistently been an issue in Prince Edward Island, and I'm worried about it. I think we're all worried about it as parents and legislators.

It's those type of things that I think this survey – not the survey. Sorry. This motion is a good start, and I appreciate everybody that did speak to it, especially the seconder who's a wealth of knowledge when it comes to children and expanding their potential. You've done that your whole entire life, and we're glad to have you here seconding this motion.

At this time, I'd like to call for a vote on this motion and adjourn debate.

Speaker: Thank you, member.

Alright. We are ready for the question, then.

All in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Hon. Members: Yea!

Speaker: All against, say nay.

The motion has carried, and it is unanimous.

[Hear, hear!]

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, and Opposition House Leader.

G. McNeilly: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to call Motion No. 35 to the floor.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: Motion No. 35. The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty moves, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the following motion:

WHEREAS aging in place is a core health policy that benefits individuals by enabling them to remain in their homes as long as possible, while also reducing strain on the health care system;

[4:30 p.m.]

AND WHEREAS adult day programs are a recognized and essential component of aging in place, providing structured care, social engagement, and respite for caregivers;

AND WHEREAS these programs help prevent unnecessary hospitalizations and delay or avoid admission to long-term care;

AND WHEREAS the Province of Prince Edward Island announced certain adult day programs would be moved to alternate sites to create temporary long-term care capacity in order to decant patients from hospitals;

AND WHEREAS the moving of adult day programs to alternate sites may reduce access to critical community-based supports for seniors and their families;

AND WHEREAS there has been no clear public timeline or confirmation of locations for the full restoration of these programs;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island call upon the Government to recognize adult day programs as essential health system infrastructure within the Province's aging in place strategy;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly call upon the Government to publicly disclose a clear plan, including

timelines and locations, for the full restoration of all displaced adult day programs;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly call upon the Government to ensure that any future use of community-based program space for alternate purposes does not result in a net loss of adult day program capacity;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly call upon the Government to table, by leave, annually to the Legislative Assembly, a report on current capacity, waitlists, and projected need for adult day programming across Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, I'd call upon you to commence debate.

G. McNeilly: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to talk about this motion. It's about day programming, which is pretty sacred across Prince Edward Island. It's where people get a hand when they need help, and that's what we're here to do, in essence.

I look at it and I say day programming is not really the right word for it. I think it minimizes what exactly is happening there, because this is an essential program. It's essential because of the direction that we've taken – that is, to provide people the opportunity to stay at home longer and age with dignity. I think that's very, very important.

This government has invested a lot of money into that, and I think it was the right decision – one, because our system was not ready to handle what was coming at us if people did not stay home. There's been programs. There's been staff. There's been people moving towards trying to get people to stay at home, and that is supporting people – caregivers. It's with nursing staff. It's with people visiting people's home, and it's become a profession that's crucially important for Prince Edward Island.

Imagine if we didn't have it at this time. We're in the situation with a crisis in our hospitals and our long-term care facilities, and that's with all the support to allow people to stay at home, but when people stay at home, they're working so hard for the person that they love that they need a break. They absolutely need a break.

That's where programs – and that's where the hard-working staff – a big shout-out to all of the day program providers across Prince Edward Island. There's incredible, loving, compassionate people that come in, and they allow people and families the opportunity to be taken care of, to give people a break.

I was at Brecken House yesterday. When you go into Brecken House – it is at PE Home. It's just to the left, and you have to ring a doorbell – ding dong. It's a doorbell, because it's a – you have to ring the doorbell.

M. MacFarlane: What did it sound like? What was it again?

G. McNeilly: It sounded like dong ding.

[Laughter]

G. McNeilly: I don't know. Ding dong.

You ring – that's exactly what it sounds like. I've rang it a million times, and there's always somebody that answers. The people are always so excited to see you. They're so excited to see you.

[4:35 p.m.]

There's only room for eight people. The staff are there, and they're always busy working hard to take care of people. When you see – they're happy. You come in and they'll tell you about their day. They're getting a break, but they're excited to be somewhere loved. That's what they do more than anything.

The problem is that at a place like Brecken House, there's almost 70 people on the waitlist. There are families just in need of this service so badly, and they don't have a place to get that support. It provides them an opportunity to go into the facility that they might call home.

Brecken House is there, but it's at PE Home. PE Home is a 134-unit facility right now. What it does is it provides them an opportunity that – it's not so scary. PE Home can, and maybe will, be their home. Beach Grove, Riverview Manor – these are all places – Colville Manor. I toured the day facility there, or the area there. These are all places, and it's a step program that's essential. They provide services that you can't do outside of a set-up place to do it.

So, why I'm talking about protecting and restoring the adult day program – and I talked about this a couple of years ago. When this came up, I was the one who said in the Legislature three years ago: "Listen, let's move Brecken House out of this facility, double it in size, and look at the expansion of this because we're going to need it in the future." This was three years ago that I started talking about it.

The staff were okay with it, and we could move it outside where you could do a bigger day program, where you could do 25-30 people a day. There's need of that. You can have all the facilities and enhance it, and the staff were okay with that.

But what I didn't agree to and what I didn't suggest was: "Hey, let's do it really quickly because the hospital is at full capacity and they're at a level 4." They were at 130 percent. It might sound like I'm against any plan to decant the hospital – no. I've been worried about this for a very long time as the Health critic.

But you can't take a day program space. You can't have people coming in and measuring off areas when the day program is happening, because that's an essential service. That's an essential service for families and people across the province. We don't have capacity in this, and you're not going to take this on a weekend and move it somewhere else because, remember, the doorbell – I'm not going to make the.... It's a secure area for a reason. It's a secure area; inside there, people are safe and they're well taken care of.

I can run you through what they do during the course of the day. There's all kinds of cognitive stimulation. There's all kinds of activities. They're feeling better after they leave to go home, and they're so happy to be there.

The other thing is that these facilities – when eight people are there, that gives the staff a chance to just take a shower or a bath. I mean, how do we look at.... Families can't do that. They get to a point where they can't do that. It can be the only time they get a bath during the week, and it means so much for them. It allows them to stay home for longer periods of time, and that happens.

I've toured the facility and I know what they do there. These are essential services if our province has moved towards home care, which I

think is a good solution and it's the one that we have.

When we're talking about that, why it's important to be at PE Home, is they have their set schedule where they can have their meals, and their meals are associated with the facility. They just come in and they have their meals there. They can have a bath. They do their exercise program.

[4:40 p.m.]

When I went in yesterday, they were just about to start the exercise program. They're all in line, ready to go, and they're getting the services required. Another day, they were picking articles out of the newspaper, and they were having craft time. These are the important things that are crucially important.

When you talk to the staff at various places across the province, they don't understand how you can do this, because for Riverview Manor, for example, they don't have any windows. There are no windows. There's none. There are no windows. I don't know how you can have somebody commit to having – where you're going to take a day program out for four beds and not have any windows in the facility. That's going to be their home.

The word "temporary" in long-term care – it doesn't just mean temporary. I think the definition is it could be an extended period of time, six months up to, I don't know, maybe two or three years, ten years. I'm not sure what it is, but it can be an extended period of time.

It's not set up. It's not set up for that in PE Home. Everybody in PE Home, when you're in there, has their own separate washroom, a private washroom. You can't do that in this facility.

When they came in to start to do it – and I appreciate the workers. Even the workers were – they have to measure it off because you have to put call bells down from the ceiling, because everybody needs a call bell, but how are you going to divide it? It just becomes an impossibility with one washroom and with various things that do not – the space was not designed for that.

One of the places that Brecken House – and Brecken House is the facility in my area they talked about. I appreciate the staff at Health PEI

and the department looking for places, but above the bowling alley is not going to work. That's one of the things that was on the list. You can't have this program above the bowling alley at the Basilica across the way.

You have to plan for something like this, and the plan is going to take investments. We will need these investments for the next 25 years to come. Brecken House day programming needs to be expanded, and it needs to be looked at. What are the models of choice across the province? I think Brecken House, I think Riverview – I think these are the places that are doing it well.

At Riverview, it's neat. They have the kitchen area in there. They have couches. And the staff, too, when I talked to them – I didn't ask them very many questions because I really just didn't want them to get in trouble. I just wanted to see the place, and they were excellent, but they're working so hard, and they're just looking at me like, "We need this place protected."

I think the minister has listened and I think he.... They just know the value of this, and so do I. It needs to be expanded, but it needs to be done the right way. This decision put a lot of fear into the workers across Prince Edward Island. There's something special about it. If you go and just talk to them – if you go and see them, there's something special. They create a bond that's so incredible that they really have an impact on each and every one that comes in.

I was there one day up in one of the areas outside of my district, and I watched them come in. I watched a family come in. It was such a warm welcome. Between the staff and the family, it was like they hadn't seen each other – I think they probably just saw each other the day before, but the warm welcome was there on both sides, and it was truly something to see.

These are the programs that are working. I think this motion pretty much says that I'll be there to defend this area because I see the value in it.

All the long-term care workers – because once an organization has been formed at the hospital that's making decisions out for long-term care, you know that the long-term – they're experts. They know what's happening, and they can take a lot. They can have a full building and they work together, but it affects things like patient ratios. It affects things like worker stress. It affects things like violence in the workplace with long-term care.

[4:45 p.m.]

These are all things that Island staff are telling us. They can take a lot and they're here to support, but you've got to communicate with them, and you've got to make sure that whoever's making these decisions walks a day in their shoes before these decisions are made.

I'm here to say that it's come to this floor, and I look forward to the debate. I look forward to closing the debate and this is something – day program – that we need.

If we're in a position right now that we need those eight beds, 12 beds so badly – this is just going to be a short-term gap, and we're in a whole lot of trouble with long-term care and we're in a whole lot of trouble right now. We've got to make sure that anytime we get to stand up, as we stand up and say thank you to the staff – thank you to the med staff, the incredible staff that are working so hard and so tirelessly every day because we cannot lose them. Right now, long-term care staff are moving towards home care, and they don't want to. They don't want to do that, but they have gotten to the point where they don't know what to do, and they're frustrated.

I'm here to say – and I know the minister will probably stand up and say it – that we value you. You have done so much for so many people in Prince Edward Island, and our long-term care facilities are so important, especially the public ones and our day programming. I look forward to comments from others on this because I think this motion is probably – in my mind, it feels like one of the most important ones just because I care about what's happening so much, and you can too. Just get in there and see these day program facilities if you get a chance, Mr. Speaker.

But I'll pass it on to our seconder for this motion.

Thank you.

Speaker: I'll call upon the seconder of the motion, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's a pleasure to rise today and speak on this motion. I wanted to thank the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty for bringing this

motion forward. And as he just ended, it is true – he is very passionate about anything to do with any of the adult programs right across Prince Edward Island, and when he says he’s knocked on doors, he’s knocked on I bet you almost every door for long-term care, community care – any program that provides service to adults on Prince Edward Island, he’s been in that facility because he does care and he has that compassion to help people. So, again, I thank him for bringing this motion forward. It means a lot to him.

I will be very brief in my comments so that we can get others to speak to it and hopefully the motion will be supported by everyone in the House.

This is not a partisan matter. Adult day programs serve families in every corner of this Island, in Charlottetown, to Tignish, right to Souris, and everywhere in between. Whenever these programs are disrupted without a clear plan, Island families bear the cost, and that’s why the member – all the members in this House, actually, should stand to support this.

I want to plainly speak about those individuals that we’re talking about. We’re talking about an 80-year-old woman with dementia who attends a day program maybe three days a week, and not because her family doesn’t love her, but because her daughter works, her other children work, and they simply cannot be present every hour of the day to care for their mom. And we’re talking about a husband who’s been his wife’s primary caregiver for years, who gets two afternoons a week to run errands – maybe it’s to see a doctor himself – and maybe just get out and breathe.

So, when an adult day program disappears even for a short period of time, these people are left without a safety net, and when family caregivers reach a breaking point, the next option is very often a hospital bed or a long-term care facility, and that costs more, and it’s harder on families. It is entirely preventable.

[4:50 p.m.]

The government has stated clearly that aging in place is a cornerstone of health policy here on Prince Edward Island. I’ll take them on their word for that, but policy commitments mean nothing without the infrastructure to support them. Adult day programs are not an add-on to the health care system, they are loadbearing. Removing them and the system downstream –

hospitals, emergency rooms and long-term beds – feel the weight. And it’s reasonable, in fact, and it is necessary for this Assembly to ask the government to demonstrate that its actions match its stated values.

So, what are we asking for? Four things, and none of them are really unreasonable. We’re asking for the government to abandon its efforts to address hospital capacity, and we understand the pressures the system is under, but decanting patients from hospital beds is a legitimate and necessary goal, but we are asking that this is not to be accomplished at the expense of seniors who depend on the day programs or the caregivers who depend on respite.

We’re asking for a public, time-bound plan for when and where these programs will return – not just a general assurance; we’re asking for a plan.

We’re asking for a guarantee that temporary measures do not quietly become permanent losses of capacity, because on this Island, we have seen too many times how a temporary measure becomes the new normal.

We are asking for annual accountability – a report to this Assembly so that members, advocates, and families can track whether the system is actually keeping pace with an aging population. That’s not a burden; that’s good governance.

These aren’t extraordinary demands. They are basic standards of transparency and care.

Prince Edward Island is a small place. We know our neighbours. We know the seniors in our communities, and they know us.

The seniors we are speaking about today did not build this province looking for special treatment. They are not asking for anything they have not already given. They’ve worked. They’ve raised their families. They’ve contributed, and now, at a stage of life where they need some support to remain in their homes and in their communities, they are being asked to wait without a timeline, without a location, and without a plan. That is not good enough, and this Assembly can say so today.

I’m very proud to second this motion because it says something simple and important – that seniors of Prince Edward Island deserve more than uncertainty. They deserve a clear commitment that the supports that they rely on

will be there – not someday, but with a plan, a date, and a location.

Again, in closing, I want to thank the mover for bringing this bill forward. I urge all members to support this motion.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: Thank you, seconder.

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. C. Deagle: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the member bringing this motion forward and how passionate he is when it comes to not only the adult day programs, but all of health care on Prince Edward Island. I know he's been the critic now for quite a long time, and he knows the file very well.

Our system, as everyone knows, has been running – well, it was level 4; it's now down to level 3. Obviously, there's still a significant number of patients requiring long-term care that are still in the hospital, so even though we are down to a level 3 on overcapacity, there's still a significant amount of patients requiring long-term care.

There's no question the value that the day programs add. I'm sure everyone in here has received dozens and dozens of e-mails, especially when this was in the news a little while ago. My inbox was flooded. I've had a few e-mails just this past week on that.

There certainly was never any intention to not offer the day programs. They were looking at moving some to alternative spaces temporarily to try and deal with that overcrowding in our hospitals, and move patients through so that we don't have – right now, we have patients waiting in the ER for a significant amount of time.

Really, you could say: What was the lesser of two evils – to move the day programs temporarily to a different location in some cases, or to potentially have someone pass away in the waiting room or in a stretcher in the hallway in the ER? The decisions are not made lightly.

What I would point out, too, is that these decisions were operational decisions of Health PEI. I know I did speak to Health PEI at the time – in particular, about Souris and the Colville

Manor. I know that was one location that we received a lot of feedback on.

[4:55 p.m.]

I spoke with them. I completely understood where they were coming from, but I think in Souris, with the day program, I think it worked – the way that facility is set up, and the rooms and whatnot, it was different than other facilities. So, I think – just to take a second look at that one particular day program there.

But this is what I always come back to. I would actually agree that I think I should – I'm the one that answers. I'm the Minister of Health. I sit in the Legislature. I have to answer the questions in regard to health care and be held responsible.

I know I bring this up all the time in Question Period and sometimes just as political fodder back and forth, but – political interference in the system. Health PEI made a decision, an operational decision, and now the opposition parties – at least the official opposition; the third party might be similar in their thoughts on this – want me to politically interfere to change a decision of Health PEI.

Now, I support the motion. There's no issue. Everyone knows how important the day programs are. We want them to continue. Right now, it's kind of on pause – using any of those spaces, because we have gone down to a level 3 – I think just to take a second look to see if – really even just how all the day programs work and if there is a better way to offer them or to improve it.

Right now, I guess you could say using those spaces is – you could say it's on pause. So, I think everyone can just kind of take a step back and we can take a second look at that. But this is what I always come back to – the political interference.

Now, the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty had a meeting booked with the interim CEO of Health PEI this morning that he didn't show up to. He was a no-show – which happens. I've missed meetings, but this is my point.

We had the interim CEO of a \$1.3 billion organization giving up time to meet with a member of the opposition. Obviously she has no issue doing and wanted to meet with the member who didn't show up to the meeting, but is he politically interfering in the system? I don't

know. I think it's a fair question. We're always criticized over here, and pundits in the media – Paul MacNeill, et cetera – for political interference. It's this line that's always circling around of political interference.

I think there's a healthy balance where the elected officials, the minister – to hold the system accountable. So, I think there's a way that we can all work together. But I did bring up the point that Health PEI said that they felt like they almost had to hire a full-time staffer just to respond to committee requests and letters that they constantly receive from the opposition parties.

Definitely, you have to be held accountable, and I think there's a role to play there, but at some points they were appearing before committees non-stop, and the amount of prep work that has to go in to prepare for those committees and respond to letters – to gather information from across the system to respond accurately to letters and questions.... And I've seen some of the letters – I think, more in particular, that the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty has sent – asking for a lot of detailed, specific information. It takes time to gather that information. Do we want our team at Health PEI spending all of their time constantly responding to these requests? I don't think so.

I think let's let them do the work they can do, and especially not book meetings with them and then don't show up. We should be valuing our time, especially of our CEO, who has a lot of important things to do to book off an hour meeting in the morning and then the member not even show up. Probably needs a new scheduler.

But I do agree that – I think what we've said is we'll take a step back and re-evaluate the day programs. We're not going to take any of those spaces away right now. We support the motion 100 percent. I know how important they are to the residents, and not necessarily just the residents, but the folks that come in from the community that use those day programs.

I know he's checking his calendar there just to make sure that it was – maybe it was missing out of his calendar, that meeting.

We support the motion. I just want to work with Health PEI, work with the communities, the staff, to make sure that we're offering the best possible program.

[5:00 p.m.]

Hopefully the system will continue to come down a bit. Level 3 still isn't ideal. We want to keep improving that, but the reality is our population is aging. We should have planned –

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called, member. Can you adjourn debate with a seconder?

Hon. C. Deagle: Sure. I'll adjourn debate, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability.

Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

M. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, that this House adjourn until Wednesday, May 13th, at 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

[The Legislature adjourned until Wednesday, 13 May 2026 at 1:00 p.m.]