

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Darlene Compton

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

[S. MacEwen in the chair]

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

Welcome back to my colleagues for another week of debate in our Legislature, to all those who are tuned to at home, and to the grade 7 class at Birchwood School who is joining us today. Welcome. It's good to see you here, and their teacher, Melanie Cudmore. I see Luanne Inman here. It's good to see you, as well. I understand that you've been learning a lot about the Legislature and politics in your studies. That's really, really exciting. We'll do our best in here to make sure we're on our very best behaviour in here today to show you what good government looks like in all its forms. Welcome.

I also wanted to say, yesterday, as you know, Mr. Speaker, it would be a busy spot in Morell yesterday in the Midgell River...

Deputy Speaker: Sure was.

[1:05 p.m.]

Hon. D. King: ...with the first day of trout fishing. It was good to see good weather and so many people participating; went out and got their lines wet for the first time. Just depending on where you were, I've heard reports of really good fishing and really poor fishing, just depending on where you were and who you were. Over 10,000 Islanders will participate in the angling season this year, so I hope they do so with good luck and safety in mind.

I wanted to add my voice to that of Rustico-Emerald who was singing the praises last week of the *Mean Girls* production at Bluefield High School. I got a chance to go on Saturday and was just blown away by the amount of talent on display. It was so good. The gym was full. Everybody really enjoyed it. The actors were amazing. The band was off the charts. You would be forgiven if you

thought you were leaving the Confederation Centre of the Arts and not the Bluefield auditorium, it was that good. It was so good.

[Interjections]

Hon. D. King: Yes, the chairs – they leave a little to be desired for sitting for an extended period of time, but it was well, well worth it. I would say, even though the hon. member didn't want to boast, his daughter, Annika Trivers – certainly a scene-stealer, a tremendous actress. She did a great job. [Applause]

Thank you very much for a good show.

Hon. S. Myers: Her father's a good actor, too.

Hon. D. King: Yes. [Laughter]

Last week, I recognized that the Eastern Canadian Ringette Championships were being hosted in PEI. The capital region was busy; over 500 participants and visitors here to take part. Some excellent ringette from various divisions, and for the first time in history, the team from PEI, the U14 Wave, were the Eastern Canadian champions in the U14 division, defeating Ontario 4-1 in the final.

I wanted to say to coach Brittney MacCormac, all the coaches and staff; even the Deputy Premier, a very proud father of Jenell Thompson, who is a member of the team, did a great job. Congratulations to all those who were on the winning team but all of those who participated and the wonderful organizing committee that did a first-class job of hosting the events from start to finish. The opening ceremonies, I'm told, were just off the charts good. Great to see that take place here in PEI. Congratulations to all.

I had the opportunity yesterday to speak and have breakfast with the members of the Eastern PEI Chamber of Commerce. We had a breakfast and a chat about issues of importance to that end of the Island that, of course, is my birthplace that I love so well; a lot of talk about the importance of maintaining the ferry service, and the optimism there is for a good tourism season. I wanted to thank Blair Aitken and all of those at the Eastern Chamber for inviting me.

Finally, I wanted to say thank you and recognize the benevolence of Regis and Joan Duffy, of course, who give to so much and have done so much for PEI. They recently made a significant contribution to the Holland College Thrive campaign. So generous with their time, money, and expertise; just two of the greatest Islanders we ever had the fortune to have here. To Regis and Joan, thank you very much for all you've done and for your contribution to this wonderful cause for Holland College.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will say enjoy the proceedings today. Thank you.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's a pleasure to rise and welcome all those who are watching online and all those who are visiting in our gallery today, in particular those from Birchwood – welcome – and to the staff, Melanie – I knew her as Melanie Myers. She was a former District 27 constituent; well before my time, though. Anyway, welcome to the proceedings today.

The weather was excellent over the weekend. The forecast didn't look good, but it was really good to get out. I saw a lot of people doing yardwork. I did see a lot of fires, too, with burning brush and leaves and such, but just to make sure that people check the fire index before they do that and to use a lot of caution because the fire departments are called out probably too often – and they're volunteers, leaving their work and such – because people just haven't taken that time to take care or plan it well. So, just please do so.

Fishing was mentioned; trout fishing, bass fishing. They're out everywhere. Midgell River was mentioned. I saw a Facebook post on – somebody had a bass. They had to put it back because it was over the size, but it was huge out there. I'm not sure how many lobsters that one has eaten, but I'd be very concerned about that. Maybe there should be a little bit of pressure put on the federal government to maybe change that size to the striped bass.

[1:10 p.m.]

Also, out and about, the harbour is busy with activity. Boats are being hauled to all the harbours getting ready for the lobster fishing season, for the scallop season. The crab boats have already been out. I know in Tignish Harbour, there are 28 boats that go out there and they're coming back in with their catch. It's a good feed of crab. If anybody enjoys seafood, please support one of our major industries here on Prince Edward Island.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I wish everyone a good day. Thank you.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome to my colleagues and the Pages today, everyone tuning in from around the Island and Charlottetown-Victoria Park, and a very special, warm welcome to the students from Birchwood. It's really nice to have you in here and I love that there are so many of you. And Melanie Cudmore and Luanne Inman, good to see you. Thanks for coming in.

I was looking for familiar faces and I see a couple. I do breakfast program on the grade 9 floor, so I know that I've seen a couple of you before, but it's really nice to have you in here, so thank you for coming.

I just want to wish a really big good luck to Campbell and Brecken Burrows. They're a brother duo, and they're off to fencing nationals in Saskatchewan in May. They're the first Islanders to attend the nationals in over a decade. Their club, the fencing association, was founded by Lothar Zimmermann around 1967 and he's still actively running the club. Impressive longevity and a lot of excitement in that club right now.

Campbell came seventh at the Canada Games recently, and Brecken was the youngest person to ever win the Frank Zimmerman Trophy, for winning foil at last year's provincials. I had to google what foil meant, but it's a type of tool that they use to fence. Best of luck to them, and we know you'll represent PEI very well.

Of course, this week is a Resident Care Worker, Patient Care Worker, and Home Support Worker Week across the Island, so just take this opportunity to once again say thank you to the people who do this crucial work; the backbone of our health care system. Thank you very much and I wish you a great week.

Also this evening is the Prince Edward Island Museum and Heritage Foundation AGM at Beaconsfield Carriage House this evening at 6:30, and the speaker this year is Mi'kmaq artist Melissa Peter-Paul. She was a recipient of the prestigious 2023 Atlantic Indigenous Artist Award and the 2023 Leo Cheverie Cultural Connector of the Year Award. Congratulations to Melissa, and I look forward to hearing you speak.

The foundation operates museums across the province: Acadian Museum, Basin Head Fisheries, Beaconsfield Historic House, Elmira Railway Museum, Eptek Art and Culture Centre, Green Park Shipbuilding Museum and Yeo House, the Kensington Locomotive, and Orwell Corner Historic Village. Really looking forward to that this evening.

Finally, on a personal note, I know I mentioned in here last week about the state of so much garbage being around, and the snow melting early, and our parks being really full of garbage. I know that Birchwood does cleanups every year, too, so looking forward to that.

I had mentioned it on the weekend that that was a goal of mine, to get Orlebar Park cleaned on the weekend. Saturday, I'm just kind of puttering around the yard and my husband comes up with hockey sticks chalked off with a nail sticking on the end, and he's got gloves ready, and he said, "Here, we can go get the garbage." Sunday morning, I get up and I'm making brunch, and Hunter says, "Let's go clean the park, Dad." He and my husband Ryan went, and they cleaned part of Orlebar Park, and I went and joined them after.

I just want to thank my son, Hunter Mann, because he is only 11 years old and he is so community minded. He really seems to understand that when you're a part of a community, that means that you give back. Your mom is very proud of you. I know he's

not watching right now; he might watch it, but he probably won't care that much.

I just want to thank all of our young people who are so community minded and who really understand that to be a contributing part of your community means that you help your community, and you give back in any way that you can. In advance, thank you. I'm assuming Birchwood will probably be doing their park cleanup again this year, and trails and stuff. I helped last year; I look forward to it again this year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, member. It is wonderful to see a great crowd. I know we've got a lot of students. If there's anybody who is uncomfortable or doesn't have enough room, you are welcome to go use the extra room over there as well.

I'm going to call on the hon. Minister of Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population.

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

It's wonderful to rise today and welcome back all of my colleagues on this beautiful, sunny, warm day. I'd also like to welcome the grade 7 class from Birchwood, and Melanie Cudmore and Luanne Inman. It's awesome to have you here today. I would be remiss if I did not mention that my daughter Emma Redmond is part of the class, and it is very exciting to have her here today, even if it's a little embarrassing when your mom announces that.

I wish everyone in Mermaid-Stratford a beautiful day today.

Thank you.

[1:15 p.m.]

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

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

Welcome, everyone, to the Chamber today. I have to go off the Premier's kind words about the ringette this weekend. We had a

group of young athletes that did something very special here on Prince Edward Island, and we got to witness it on home soil. I had never seen the MacLauchlan rink rocking so loudly and boisterously, and it was such a great thing for our Island U14 Wave team to win the gold medal.

I did promise to read the names out of the champions for the record, to be on the record forever:

Airlie Matheson
Allie Bailey
Avery Andrews
Charlotte Trainor
Jenell Thompson
Jessie MacDonald
Klody Maud Mazerolle
Madeleine Breen
Mariah Ralph
Meleah Veld
Molly Casford
Peyton Richards
Sadie Hughes
Sarah Dowling
Sarah MacLean
Summer Britton
Teagan McNeil

And the dedicated coaching staff who developed these young ladies into such wonderful players:

Brittney MacCormac
Tyler Larter
Georgia Fraser
Terry MacCormac
Callie Veld

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

It's a pleasure to rise today and say hi to folks who are watching from District 22, and to welcome all the students here from Birchwood School and their teachers. Welcome here today.

On Saturday, I had the opportunity to bring opening remarks to the Federation of Foster Families in Summerside. It was a wonderful event, and I'd like to thank the federation for the beautiful event that they put on. I'd like

to thank Dr. Michael Ungar, speaker for the day, and of course, the 88 foster families across Prince Edward Island. Thank you for the beautiful work that you do in looking after our children.

Thank you.

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

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

It's certainly a pleasure to rise today on this beautiful Tuesday. Welcome back to all of my colleagues, hello to everyone tuning in from across the Island, and to all those tuning in from District 9, and hello to all of our guests here in the gallery. It's wonderful to see you all. It really, truly is. It's always good to have youth here in the gallery. To your teacher and your principal, nice to see you both. Thank you for being here and for bringing your class here. Wonderful.

I did have the opportunity to take part in the PEI Home and School Federation 71st AGM over the weekend, and I just want to take this opportunity to thank all of the volunteers within the Home and School Federation for their dedication and their collaboration in supporting our schools and Island families.

And of course, a big thank you to the outgoing president, Dionne Tuplin, for her tremendous advocacy and leadership. She's served over the last couple of years and really has been a tremendous leader. Thank you, Dionne, if you're tuning in.

Also, a big congratulations to incoming president Shannon Brunell. Shannon's been a volunteer with the federation. She's been an outstanding volunteer, and I know she'll be an excellent president. Really looking forward to working with her.

Finally, Raeanne Arsenault was honoured as Volunteer of the Year at the AGM. I had the opportunity to sit beside her during one of the events. The dedication of these volunteers – it's really tremendous, the time they put in with breakfast programs, and playground fundraising, and so much more. So, a big congratulations and a thank you to Raeanne, and again, all those who

participate and help to support our Island schools and families.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just saying hello to everybody in District 14 and to all our guests from grade 7 in Birchwood. I just want to say the last time I saw you was – Birchwood does a great job of doing Winter Wellness Day. So, I was in to – remember, we were dancing? Yeah. Better not do it in here, but they were a fantastic group. Grade 7s, way to go. Keep exercising. This is where Winter Wellness Day was passed, so that was in direct relation to this a few years ago.

I look forward to coming back and seeing you again in grade 8. Keep exercising.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Members

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

[1:20 p.m.]

National Volunteer Week – *Mean Girls* Musical

B. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's National Volunteer Week, and the theme is "Every Moment Matters." So, a huge thank you to the volunteers across our communities and the massive contribution that you make.

Today, as might be expected, I want to highlight the volunteers who worked to make the *Mean Girls* musical production at Bluefield High School – and its important anti-bullying and pro-kindness message – a huge success. It was an incredible marathon of eight fantastic performances last week, very fetch, and showcased huge squills. [Laughter]

The leadership team includes choreography and vocal direction by Morgan Wagner, director Stacey Bondt, producer Ryan

Brehaut, stage manager Amy MacPherson, and musical director Kirsten MacLaine, and also students Isabella Butler and Tabitha Angel, who stepped up to be vocal and dance captains, respectively.

It was the first time since the pandemic that a large-scale musical production like this was able to take place, and I know the students, parents, and community are very grateful. Many have been waiting for years for this opportunity.

As the Premier said, I have a special connection to this cohort of youth because my daughter Annika is a grade 12 student who is passionate about musical theatre and played a lead role in the cast.

I want to give a special shout-out to those from District 18 who were part of the show, and hopefully I'm not missing any: cast members Laura MacDougall, Henry Murnaghan, Annika Trivers, Fiona Moak, Bailey Fall, and Cohen MacNeill; band members Matthew Toombs and Ava Pineau; parent musician Marti Hopson; stage crew member Sophia Reid; and of course, musical director Kirsten MacLaine.

Thanks again to all the volunteers who make our Island communities so artistically vibrant, bringing joy to so many because they know that every moment matters.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Wi-fi for public seniors housing

H. MacLennan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to highlight the significance of providing wi-fi for Island seniors in public housing.

The Province owns and operates senior housing units across the province. There are seniors housing units that currently do not have access to wi-fi services.

Recently, I hosted two senior navigator events in my district in which there were over 100 attendees. Most of these seniors were not aware that there were programs out there that they could access.

Having access to technology is imperative for seniors. Internet for seniors allows for stronger connection. Due to the fact that we offer an online platform to receive medical care, it is essential that seniors have access to wi-fi. Socially, when events are happening in our communities, details about the events are often shared online. Wi-fi services would allow seniors to connect with their respective families off-Island.

Seniors who do not have access to wi-fi are not receiving information on essential programs that would substantially help them. So, I urge the government to ensure access to wi-fi services in seniors housing units with expediency to allow internet which would significantly improve the lives of our Island seniors.

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

Privatization of Health Care

G. McNeilly: This spring session presents a pivotal moment as our province adjusts to mounting pressures. Each member in this Chamber represents countless constituents with urgent health care needs.

Is this government adequately addressing these concerns? Does the government have a coherent strategy for the kids who are here today, and their families?

These are the pressing questions Islanders are pondering as their wellbeing often hangs in the balance. Every decision, or lack thereof, reverberates throughout the system. When under-preparedness leads to desperation, the government risks hasty solutions that undermine the very system we aim to preserve.

Regrettably, we observe a gradual shift towards a health care model relying on privatization. Whether it's outsourcing long-term care or contracting nursing services, these measures jeopardize the integrity of our care system designed to uphold the dignity of both workers and patients.

Noam Chomsky, a cognitive scientist, described the shift to for-profit care as the following: "That's the standard technique of privatization: defund, make sure things don't

work, people get angry, you hand it over to private capital."

The budget before us today holds significant implications for health care, housing, and overall quality of life. Will the government prioritize long-term planning or persist in prioritizing profits over people? Only time will reveal the course of action.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

[1:25 p.m.]

This government has the worst health care in this country by just about every measure. Accessibility, wait times, doctor complement – we hold the last or near last place. Yet, every time questions on health care come up, the government refuses to take any responsibility for why we are worse off than any other region in our country.

Since this government was elected, Islanders on the patient registry have risen by over 20,000.

Bilateral health care agreement

Question to the Minister of Health: Under the new federal/provincial health care agreement, how much money does PEI receive on an annual basis?

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

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

I think we've said before that although money is certainly an important component of our health care woes, obviously the workforce is significant too. We appreciate the contribution from the federal government. We're employing it the way that they want to. It's interesting to note that we align almost perfectly with the priorities

of the new funding that they announced. Again, we'll continue to invest those funds as best we can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Well, the answer to the question is almost \$100 million. Mr. Speaker, you and I and every Islander know that the issues in our health care system are not money issues. It was just said: it's not money issues. We've heard from the Premier's own mouth that if the health care system could be fixed by money, he would have done it yesterday.

The truth is our system is at a breaking point because for more than five years, as government failed to be transparent about the true state of the system, they have meddled in the worst possible way in health delivery and have refused to be accountable for any of it. In fact, it seems quite clear to me that the only aspects of our health care system that are not suffering from this government's own incompetence are those aspects of the health care system that are privately owned or operated.

Access to Maple (further)

Question to the Minister of Health: How many Island patients needed to make use of Maple in the last 12 months?

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

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

I don't have that data right at my fingertips, but I think we've seen a prevalence of technology in all of our systems, from online meetings to health care. There are some efficiencies in the Maple platform. I don't think we'll ever go away from virtual care, but we continue to look at it to make our system more efficient so people don't have to drive; they don't have to wait in waiting rooms and risk infecting other people. There is a convenience factor with virtual care, and we'll continue to explore it so that we can provide health care as efficiently as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Rare is the occasion when this government has an idea of its own. For the first three years of their first term, they relied on Liberal budgets, Liberal plans, and Liberal talking points, but now it seems they have abandoned the Liberal practices and adopted those of their big political brothers, the Ontario Conservatives, who seem to be leading the way towards privatization of health care delivery in this country.

Here in PEI, our government throws untold amounts of money at the virtual health care delivery system, Maple, because their own incompetence has led to a situation where we have the worst access to family doctors in this country.

Question to the Minister of Health: How much money has your government spent on Maple over the past two years?

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

Hon. M. McLane: Thank you.

I probably have it on an annual basis – we talked about in the budget debate – with regards to a two-year spend on Maple. We have made it easier for physicians to support that program with the Atlantic Registry. I would applaud the College of Physicians and Surgeons who allowed us to have more providers actually provide that service.

The hon. member is from a rural part of PEI. We all understand there are challenges sometimes for rural delivery. I would encourage the member that this is a good way to provide health care in certain places of the Island where we have some challenges.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: One way to fix that is putting a doctor in rural PEI.

Normally, the advocates of privatized health care, which our caucus members are not, would say that privatization encourages competition. Competition leads to better services at lower prices, et cetera, but that doesn't seem to be the case here.

Instead, it would appear that this government seems content on ensuring Maple maintains control over access to health care. We hear every day a new story about an Islander receiving poor service through Maple that doesn't meet their needs. Privatization doesn't encourage better service when it's the only option.

Minister, how many complaints has your department or Health PEI received regarding the inadequate services that Maple provides?

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

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

Back to the Maple platform, we have put in place a primary care access clinic, so on virtual care, if they can't provide that service, there is a referral pathway for you to then to visit one of three primary care access clinics in PEI.

Obviously, we know that not every issue can be resolved virtually; that's pretty evident. So, we've stood up these PCACs. They're very successful. It's another way for people to access health care where they are in an efficient fashion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

But my question was: How many complaints has your department or Health PEI received?

[1:30 p.m.]

Just this week, I received two complaints from two different Island households. The first waited for seven hours before finally

paying a \$70 fee, despite the fact that she qualified for the free service as she doesn't have a primary provider and is registered on the patient registry.

Interestingly enough, after the fee was paid, she received care within three minutes – in three minutes, to be exact, Mr. Speaker. That's not access to health care, that's extortion for health care.

Question to the minister: Is this an acceptable practice for a service provider who your government pays to undertake?

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

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

Of course, we don't want anyone to pay for health care. We have universal health care. It's the basis of our system, both in Canada and in Prince Edward Island. So, we don't want that at all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The other story was of an individual – actually, a constituent of the Health minister's – who couldn't get an appointment with their family doctor for three weeks, so he decided to pursue Maple, well aware that he would have to pay a fee. So, after waiting three hours, and after having paid \$80, he was disconnected and was forced to pay another \$80 when he finally got back on.

Now, \$80 is no small amount of money to lose. So, he called Maple's support team to try and get a refund for at least one of the charges, but no such luck. He was bumped from operator to operator before, finally, he was disconnected for a second time. Hours wasted; double-charged for a service he would have better timely access to in any other province in Canada.

Question to the minister: What exactly should patients in these situations with Maple do, aside from calling your office directly to complain? What recourse do

individuals, such as this particular case, have under your health care system?

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

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

Obviously, they must have used the paid version of Maple. That's not something that we manage within the Province. We have a contract to help with unaffiliated patients. We also are going to RFP to expand those services in the next few weeks, so we'll see some improvements on the delivery of virtual care on PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: So, basically, you do nothing about it.

Maple is just one example of how this government is choosing to put private interests above investing in our public system. We're seeing more and more Islanders forced to go out of pocket for services such as MRIs, and last week, this government decided to announce \$25 million for private long-term care providers.

Now, this giant subsidy for private long-term care operators is yet another example of a government obsessed with pursuing private health care.

Privatization of health care

Question to the Minister of Health: For the record, do you believe we need more private health care services in this province, or do you believe that we need to invest more money in building up our public health care system which is a cornerstone of our Canadian identity?

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to stand up and bring a little clarity to an issue that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is trying muddy.

We have, for as long as I can remember being in this province, a hybrid model of

delivery when it comes to long-term health care patients, as well as many aspects of our health care system which have been a hybrid model for many years, including dentistry, optometry, pharmacy, and many other things.

We have taken the approach, like other responsible governments have across the country, in trying to make sure that Islanders have access to care somewhere along the continuum as quick as possible and as close to home as possible, and we made the responsible decision, like others have, to try to make sure we utilize all of the resources that we have in the health care system delivery to provide that.

We brought together over 35 people – pharmacists, et cetera – to sit down and say: Who can do what? Who can help? How can we expand our offering for Islanders? Because at the end of the day, we should care more about the people going through the door as opposed to wondering where the money comes from and where the money goes.

People need access to service. That's the approach that we've taken. We haven't created anything here. The previous government would have invested in Medavie for home care. They would have done all of the things that we have done and the next government will do because this is a small place with very complex needs.

Our aging population is expanding. We're living longer. It costs more to provide those services for individuals when you live longer. It's a comprehensive model of delivery, and I do think we run the risk with these wonderful young people in here of muddying the waters to make this one versus the other when we all should be in this together.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

That's a great spin, and it's great that somebody else stood up and answered the question because we haven't had an answer to a health care question since, what, a year or more?

[1:35 p.m.]

Access: when you're talking about doors, people can't even get to a door to access health care on Prince Edward Island. The troubling trend of this government's increasing reliance on private health care in place of properly investing in our public system continues to alarm me, but it certainly doesn't surprise me.

Recently, I've heard from not one, not two, but three doctors who are considering scaling back their practices – and one who is considering leaving altogether – in order to work exclusively as Maple care providers. This is exactly the problem with our government's plan to continue down the path of privatization. You are actually going to make access worse, and yet you don't seem willing to stop.

Physicians leaving/scaling back practices

Question to the minister or the Premier: If you have heard any of these three physicians who are considering leaving or scaling back their practices to become Maple providers in the last week, I would be curious to know how many Island physicians your office or Health PEI are aware of who have left their practice or have scaled back their practices to do the same.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Well, I think, again, I would say, Mr. Speaker, that we do live in a world where people have a freedom to decide what they want to do, where they want to work, and how they want to deploy their efforts. We live in a changing world. A doctor today doesn't practice the same way as a doctor would have 30 years ago. When I was growing up, we had two doctors in Montague – Dr. Hambly and Dr. Colborne – and they looked after everybody, essentially, almost, in Kings County. But that's not the way it works anymore.

So, we continue to work with our physician recruitment teams to try to bring more and more physicians here. We're trying to partner with the University of Prince Edward Island to actually train and grow more physicians here so they can work within the system.

But what the hon. member highlights is the changing nature of health care, and I think just throws away the whole premise of the questions he made before because if we don't adapt to the changing landscape, I don't know how we would address this going forward.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

We have doctors leaving their practices, and Islanders are told to use a private health care company in that place; a service provider that often doesn't work properly. Not every Islander has equal access to it either. Throughout all of this, the patient registry continues to climb and climb and climb.

Now, we appear to be at a point where this government is no longer updating that patient registry. It hasn't been updated since March 4th. That was six weeks ago. Under this government, we went from weekly updates to monthly updates, and now it appears we only get updates when the minister and his new CEO feel like sharing this information.

Update to patient registry (further)

Question to the minister: When exactly did you stop believing that Islanders had the right to know how many patients were waiting on the registry? Was it your decision to stop updating it, or is this a new initiative of your new CEO?

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

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

I'm not sure if the hon. member heard me on Friday when we talked about the 23 physicians who have begun to practice on PEI. Obviously, we're going in the right direction. We know we have population growth. We've had over 25,000 people move to wonderful PEI in the last five years. There's no doubt it's placing challenges on how we deliver education and health care and everything.

With the patient registry, we know it's growing because of population growth. I got three texts today from people thanking me that they somehow got the call. A couple members had some messages to say the same. So, we are working on the patient registry, and when we have net gains in doctors, we're going in the right direction.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you.

The internet was very, very busy because I received many, many emails too.

You announced 23 positions. How many FTEs does that equate to? Of the eight doctors who left the practice, what were their FTEs? How many are going to the new medical school? All of these are unanswered questions. If there were 23 full-time equivalents, great. If we could keep the eight doctors who left here, even better.

It has been brought to my attention that there is a concerning issue plaguing Heather's Way in Mill River, where residents in 26 different homes could face dire consequences due to the inability of paramedics to locate their subdivision when emergencies arise. Despite repeated attempts by concerned residents to rectify this critical situation, they have encountered a bureaucratic maze. They phoned Health PEI thinking that was the right place. Health PEI said to phone Transportation. Transportation said to phone Health.

Anyway, they called me. I told them to phone Justice. Some time has gone by.

Imagine being a rural Islander calling 911 in an emergency, but paramedics cannot locate your home. Well, that's a reality for far too many Islanders.

Accurate GPS mapping for 911

Question to the minister responsible for 911: Given the alarming reports from the Mill River area, can the minister provide assurances that immediate action will be taken to ensure accurate GPS mapping for emergency responders?

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

Hon. B. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for bringing this to my attention.

Of course, yes, we'll look at that right away.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

[1:40 p.m.]

Hon. H. Perry: I've said it before, and I'll say it again: Rural Islanders must have the same access to emergency care as all Islanders. Yes, you said you would look into it, but what specifically are you going to do today to quickly resolve this issue?

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

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

I'm just being made aware of this currently, and as soon as possible, I'll get in touch with the 911 office and make sure this is rectified immediately.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

R. Henderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

For several years now, the road to net zero focuses on the electrification of motor vehicles. Government has jumped on the bandwagon and has put targets in place by encouraging more Islanders to have electric vehicles.

Well, recent electric car sales are falling. Tesla, the king of the EV market to date, is laying off 10 percent of its global workforce, and they're not alone. Ford, Volvo, and many others have changed tactics. Sales are dropping. This is a concern, and government should be concerned.

I'm not saying for a moment that we don't need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions or that electric vehicles aren't part of the solution, but 70 percent of our emissions

come from transportation in this province, and people simply are just not buying enough vehicles at the rate that they were a year ago, for a number of reasons, and it seems to be slowing.

Net zero goals and electric vehicles

Question to the Minister of Environment: Does the news of slower sales and consumer concerns around electric vehicles put this government's goals of net zero targets in jeopardy for 2030, a mere six years away?

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

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

No.

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

R. Henderson: Well, I like his confidence there, but the reality is one of the issues that we're seeing with our electric vehicles is that we don't have enough charging stations across the Island. Tourists who come to Prince Edward Island don't want to be travelling all around trying to find a charging station, and then when they do find one, there may already be vehicles using it and they may have to wait an hour or so to get access to this.

So, question to the Minister of Environment: Why has this government continued to underfund the installation of electric charging stations, and will the minister be announcing a new program that will help incentivize businesses and tourist operations to put more charging stations in place?

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

Hon. S. Myers: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I mean, notwithstanding the fact that we probably have the best charging network in the entire country – which I believe that we do. There's absolutely zero issue travelling around. I have an EV, and I have for quite a while now. There is absolutely zero issue finding a place to charge. There's zero issue to get a charger at any time of the year.

But what I will say is this government is adding 25 new high-speed chargers in the next two years, seven of which will be 100-kilowatt chargers which basically matches what our high-speed chargers are here now, four of which will be 200-kilowatt chargers which is twice as fast as the chargers that we call high speed here now, and 14 of which will be 400-kilowatt chargers which is the fastest charger on this planet, Mr. Speaker.

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

R. Henderson: I certainly agree that we do need fast chargers, but we need more of them, and we've just got to get more of them. I think about the O'Leary rink; we put a charging station for two vehicles at the service centre. Two more. It's not enough. People are reticent to make those purchases.

Many potential electric purchasers are concerned about buying an electric vehicle. In fact, electric vehicle sales fell 31 percent the last 12 months. In comparison, the average vehicle price has dropped 3.6 percent. So, the fact that they're devaluing – and in fact, Hertz Car Rental lost millions last year over the purchase of new electric vehicles, and now don't want to go back and do that.

Question to the minister: Will your department be offering more incentives for Islanders to purchase electric vehicles so that you have a chance to actually meet your goals? Even though you're confident you will, I question that.

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

Hon. S. Myers: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Would you write a letter to the Prime Minister and tell him we don't need the carbon tax to do it? Will you finally stand up for Islanders on that front? Will you finally stop being the party who wants to hurt Canadians?

I'll tell you, never once did we say that electric vehicles were what were going to get us to our pathway to net zero. As a matter of fact, a number of times in this Assembly, I've talked about the fact that our

Island-wide transportation that is a toonie per ride is the key to lowering our transportation emissions.

I did a podcast with CBC here recently where they talked about reintroducing the train, but what I said in that was that we are going out to an RFP. I talked about how we can even further lower our emissions in transportation.

[1:45 p.m.]

EVs may be part of it; we have a rebate program that's in place to help people who want to get an EV because they want to do the right thing. But what we are trying to do is build an Island-wide transportation system that gets to every single community, that's easy to access, has lots more runs than we have, that is cheap to run because the Liberals are going to pound us with carbon tax until the end of time, so that we can meet our carbon targets and we can do it in a fair and equitable way, which Liberals know absolutely nothing about.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Chief Public Health Officer has been alerting Islanders to the growing presence of tuberculosis in PEI, both active and inactive. I'm receiving calls from Islanders who want to know what is happening beyond keeping an eye on it.

Cases of tuberculosis

Question to the Minister of Health: Will your department proactively test residents and treat those with the disease so we can keep Islanders healthy and limit its spread?

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

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

Our Chief Public Health Officer is aware of the presence of TB and some of the increases in PEI. We have some testing options available within Public Health. If

people want to get tested, I would encourage them to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know that many Islanders must travel off-Island to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to receive medical treatments that are not available here on PEI. We have a program to help with travel costs, but the eligibility criteria are tight, and very few Islanders meet them. There have been repeated calls for at least the bridge toll to be covered for all Islanders who must travel off-Island for treatment, and it baffles me that we still don't do this.

Medical travel assistance (further)

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: When can all Islanders who require medical treatment in another province expect to have the Confederation Bridge toll covered?

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

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

There's been some discussions about the toll. Obviously, the Premier has been talking to the federal government about possibly reducing that toll and reducing the burden on Islanders. I certainly would support any discussions that reduce the toll for Islanders, both for medical reasons and for other.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

How long are we going to have to wait for that? Because we've been talking about it for an awful long time.

Even with the limited programs that we have, many cancers – due to their long-term and sometimes unpredictable nature, and the bureaucracy associated with the application

process – don't lend themselves to the existing programs.

To the same minister: The Canadian Cancer Society has offered to create a partnership with government to share costs for a program that better suits the realities of those on a cancer journey. Will we be seeing this program for Island cancer patients and their families?

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

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

It's an issue we need to look at, and we appreciate the Cancer Society's opportunity to partner with us. We have invested an additional \$500,000 with Hope Air this year to help them improve their program. I would agree with the hon. member that we need to continue to look at this program and look at the thresholds and the supports that we give to Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know that there are growing costs associated with a cancer diagnosis. Far too many Canadians are finding it hard to make ends meet, and this is especially so for those diagnosed with cancer. In fact, 63 percent of Canadians said that the financial burden of cancer-related expenses would have a significant impact on their stress and mental health.

Primary caregiver grant (further)

A question to the same minister: You said on March 13th, in response to questions: the caregiver grant "...is final. It will be approved, I would say, within days." Is it ready yet, and will you make it available for caregivers of Islanders with cancer?

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

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

I share your frustration with the patient caregiver grant. I had an update the other day. We continue to wait from Canada Revenue Agency for a ruling. It's been there for 100 days, 110 days. Their expectation is 90. It's past due. We're going to try to reach out either through the Finance office or the Premier's office and get this darn thing approved.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In February this year, the Province opened a mental health emergency room at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, a welcome addition to our health care system. Advocates have described the treatment they received from the frontline staff as respectful and unrushed. These frontline staff are providing a much-needed resource to Islanders and deserve the same respect from their employer, being this government.

Health care staff and patient safety

Question to the Minister of Health: Knowing that the unit is short-staffed and that safety issues have been raised, have there been any incidents reported to your attention?

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

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

I like to talk about this, the EDSSU. I've gotten some really nice messages, and I would like to read one.

"I just saw your post about the new mental health ER. I just wanted to let you know that – blank – accessed that service this week, and it is such an improvement over the old system. As you probably know, he has bipolar disorder and at times, needs to seek professional help. The privacy and focused care the new area offers is making a huge difference to him and others who need this kind of help. Being in your position can't be easy these days, but the work you do is incredibly important. I want to just thank you on the behalf of our family."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you.

[1:50 p.m.]

Thank you, minister, for sharing that. I don't doubt that there are some benefits obviously being derived from this new unit.

However, prior to the opening of the mental health ER, the PEI Nurses' Union met with all three caucuses in this House to voice their concerns regarding very real safety issues in that unit. We heard that, among other concerns, staffing, as you know, is only at 40 percent, and safety features such as the way doors and locks worked caused a real concern among staff.

Question to the same minister: We've been told that there was an incident where nurses in the new mental health ER were seriously injured as a direct result of the safety concerns that they raised with you. Can you provide us with a comment on that incident, minister?

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

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

I was copied on the email regarding safety concerns to try to understand what the issue was at that unit. It is a new unit. They continue to work with the staff there with relation to the incident that he speaks of. I'm not sure that this is the proper forum to talk about those specific instances here, but again, it is a new unit. It is safety first; that is the priority for that unit. They deal with challenging incidents every day, that staff. We thank them for doing the work that they do. It's important that we communicate with staff, and safety is a priority.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, minister.

From what I'm hearing, Mr. Speaker, the facts and the timelines show that the minister decided to push through the opening of this unit so that he and the government could have a good news story prior to the sitting.

The minister was made well aware of the safety concerns, and he was well aware of the lack of staffing. Now we have a unit where both patients and staff are in precarious situations. Because of the understaffing, patients are spending nights in the assessment rooms with no bed, just a chair to sleep on, waiting to be seen.

Serious safety incidents have occurred because of a minister that rushed the opening to prioritize a photo op over the safety of his staff.

Question to the same minister: Was this photo op worth putting our over-worked nurses in danger?

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

Hon. M. McLane: Wow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The new member must be getting training from the former leader of the third party with regards to his questions.

Let me be very clear for this House: I did not push for the opening of the EDSSU. I value the experts that work in our department every day. It's up to those people who make those decisions. I don't make operational decisions for a photo op, and I never will.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

H. MacLennan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Slemon Park Corporation owns and operates a thriving business and residential community in my district. Dozens of tenants employ well over 1,000 Islanders, hundreds more live in Slemon Park and call it home, and many more pursue training and post-secondary opportunities here.

Slemon Park and the Atlantic Police Academy

The question to the Minister of Economic Development, Innovation and Trade: What are the key initiatives that Slemon Park Corporation will be undertaking over the coming year?

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

Hon. G. Arsenault: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question.

As you would know, Slemon Park is an important piece of property, especially when it comes to economic development in your riding, member. Very happy to say that we're working closely with them in developing different initiatives.

They have different options on the table at the moment. They are working on micro-units as we speak. They do have 265 residential units that are being used at the moment by a variety of different groups including Holland College and the Police Academy. We are going to be looking at working with them and making sure that we can continue to support the initiatives that are happening at Slemon Park.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

H. MacLennan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Atlantic Police Academy is one of the anchor tenants in Slemon Park. It has been experiencing considerable growth in the recent years as demand for the wide range of programs increase. Recently, talk has turned to the need for resident facilities to help accommodate the current and future projected growth.

Question to the Minister of Economic Development, Innovation and Trade: Have you had any discussions with the Atlantic Police Academy about possible expansion plans?

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

Hon. G. Arsenault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, again, for the question.

Yes, I have been in contact, and matter of fact, I have toured the facility and had great conversation. Had lunch with the employees there. We're looking forward to working with them and making sure that we can meet their needs and what they need to make sure that we have a very successful program there in Slemon Park.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

H. MacLennan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, the Atlantic Police Academy graduates 72 from its police science program and another 48 graduates from its correctional officer program. Both of these programs are running at full capacity and there's also an expanding range of service training opportunities.

[1:55 p.m.]

As job demands keep growing for law enforcement and related fields, there is an opportunity to grow these successful programs ever further.

Question to the Minister of Economic Development, Innovation and Trade: Would you commit to meeting with the representatives of the Slemon Park Corporation, the Atlantic Police Academy, and myself to discuss the potential growth opportunities?

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

Hon. G. Arsenault: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I've met with them previously, but I welcome the opportunity to meet again and include yourself in those meetings to make sure we listen to what they want and what

we can do to help support. So, I will definitely coordinate that meeting if that's the wish of the group.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

R. Croucher: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's hard to believe it's the middle of April on Prince Edward Island, and as you would know better than most, preparations are well underway for another upcoming fishing season. Our harbours are a beehive of activity these days, and I've been hearing concerns about the state of some of our wharves when it comes to dredging and infrastructure.

Repairs and dredging for harbours

Question to the Minister of Fisheries, Tourism, Sport and Culture: How many of our Island harbours are scheduled to receive much-needed dredging or Fiona-related repairs this year?

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

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

I can get the exact number and the schedule of when the dredging takes place, but it's all arranged by DFO and Small Craft Harbours. I think the typical spots – Naufrage, North Lake, Graham's Pond.... Malpeque, I think, is one of the first ones.

I can get the exact list and get it back to you.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

R. Croucher: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate that, to the hon. member.

There are many wharves and harbours across the province that sustained damage from Fiona on top of the wharves and harbours already needing repairs or dredge work. I visited a few of those harbours in recent weeks and spoke with fishers who are concerned. There's no denying the need for this work, much sooner than later. I know that this is largely an area of federal

responsibility, but it does have impacts on local communities and our provincial economy.

Question to the Minister of Fisheries, Tourism, Sport and Culture: Do you feel that repairs and dredging maintenance on our Island wharves are proceeding with the sense of urgency that is needed?

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

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

I would say that it could always go quicker. I do know that the new federal minister of DFO – I know that this is one area that she wants to focus on. I guess we'll find out today if there's any new money in the budget with the Small Craft Harbours, but I know in her conversations with me that this is one area she wants to focus on: our wharves and our infrastructure.

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

R. Croucher: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our greatest role in this is advocating for our wharves and harbours. They generate considerable economic activity in our province. Hundreds of jobs are tied to having safe, reliable wharves and harbours to work from. Some of these wharves are hardly safe to stand on, let alone tie their boats to.

Question to the Minister of Fisheries, Tourism, Sport and Culture: What can you do as minister to spur greater action from the federal government, who is ultimately responsible for this critical infrastructure and this problem that continues to grow every year?

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

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

I guess, obviously, just keep having a good conversation and a good relationship with the federal minister, but I'm not sure if the member has a particular wharf that he's speaking of. I know we've talked a few times in the past, but if he has a wharf in

particular, we can relay that to DFO and put pressure on them as well.

At the end of the day, it is under their jurisdiction, but we're certainly willing to work with the member and to help him out in any way we can.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the Minister of Health. Ensuring transparency and accountability to Islanders and patients accessing health care is very important in your role. Minister, you're the minister tasked with setting direction. The last Health PEI business plan was published in 2021-22. Just to put that in context, there are grade 7 students here. They were in grade 3 when we last had a business plan for Health PEI.

Business plan for Health PEI

Question to the Minister of Health: Will you be publishing a business plan that is outstanding?

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

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

I approved the business plan about three days ago, so it should be public any day now.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Interjections]

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

G. McNeilly: We haven't had one for three years, so you might as well look at what we worked on during that three-year period when we didn't have anything.

[2:00 p.m.]

In the strategic plan for Health PEI, there are indicators, and without a business plan, this is what we have to look at. There are four pillars in there: people, quality and safety of

patients, access and coordination, and innovation and effectiveness.

Workplace assessment on Health PEI HR (further)

Question to the Minister of Health: Can you please share your turnover rates for Health PEI staff, and will you please table the workplace assessment report, with unredacted recommendations included, tomorrow please?

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

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

We do have a large organization within Health PEI. I believe it's over 6,500 employees. We have a very, very large organization. One thing I must say about our new CEO, and I even wrote it down when she said it to me: "We are in the human business. We understand that every interaction is with an individual with unique needs, preferences, and experiences."

I have a lot of confidence in Melanie Fraser in her role as the CEO. She's very administratively strong. We'll continue to support our employees the best we can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

G. McNeilly: We don't know what the employees are saying because we don't have the report, so will you table that?

Health care staff and patient safety (further)

Under the same strategic plan, under quality and safety of patients, minister, there is a large amount of additional funding going towards security concerns – as was mentioned and talked about in this Legislature today – within Health PEI. Are staff safe, and are patients safe when in care?

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

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

Again, through the budget debate, I think it was very clear that we have an emphasis on security. It's unfortunate that we have to do that in today's environment, but that was something that we heard very clear. We've made significant investments in security at all of our facilities to protect our workers and to protect patients.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

G. McNeilly: The third pillar is access to health services. This government made two distinct promises, and before – today – we were talking about muddy waters and clearing the waters and adaptability. Well, I think the government is panicking.

This government made two distinct promises, and the problem with those promises is that they're very, very difficult to attain from anybody, but they were made. That's what the confusion is. That's why there's mud in the water.

The first promise was to get the patient registry to zero, and the second was to establish 30 operational medical homes, and they gave themselves targets that are quickly approaching. Their own deadline is eight months away.

Timelines on health care targets

Minister, these are crucial promises. Do you stand by these timelines, and these promises?

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

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

One thing I'd like to address: we use the word – another member used the word that we have physicians that “left” our system. What “left” means this year is that we've had five retirements, we've had a physician that actually passed away, and two that moved within our system. That's “left.” I'm not sure what the definition of “left” is.

We should celebrate some of our physicians. Dr. Spears, for example, practiced

psychiatry for 50 years. We shouldn't shame them for leaving our system.

I even had a physician last year who said to me he wanted to write a letter to the editor. He was going home to take care of aging parents, and he felt bad, and he wanted to communicate to the public that he loved it on Prince Edward Island, but because of life, he had to go back and take care of his aging parents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

G. McNeilly: I've got the same concerns, but when people need the care, they want it, and they need it to take care of their parents here, minister.

The fourth pillar is innovation and efficiency. However, this government's shift to using private health care services rather than strengthen the public system is a growing concern for Islanders. We are second in the nation, just behind Ontario, with private care homes.

Long-term care: public vs. private (further)

To the minister: Are you concerned that with your growing reliance on private providers, the staff that provide health care services in the public system will leave and take jobs in the private sector, where they can be more flexible and have more flexible work schedules?

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

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

I want to thank our nursing home operators for what they've done for us to help decant some of our hospitals. If you've seen on social media lately, Andrews of Stratford was recently awarded a national accreditation for quality at their facility. So, congratulations to Andrews of Stratford for doing that.

We understand that this is a health care issue, too. To empty out 50 beds in our acute care facilities will be impactful. We

appreciate their ability to come to the table and react and help Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The problem is, we get the planning pieces, and we don't know where you're going, minister. We don't know what these 54 beds mean. We don't know what this investment means.

I want to know, and the people that work in the public sector and long-term care want to know, minister: What are you doing to protect the jobs and integrity of our public long-term care system?

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

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

If he uses the term protect our jobs, that's one thing that we don't have to do on Prince Edward Island. I think we have lots of vacancies. We would never lay anybody off. We need every worker that we can get to work as much as they want. If they want to work more, tell them to come to their managers; apply for a higher FTE position. We want them to work, and we're not going to do any layoffs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: End of Question Period.

[2:05 p.m.]

Statements by Ministers

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

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

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

Deputy Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

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

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

Deputy Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'll ask the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot to chair Committee of the Whole House.

[T. DesRoches in the chair]

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

Minister, did you have a stranger you'd like to invite to the floor?

Hon. B. Thompson: Yes, I do.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

If the stranger could state her name and position for Hansard, please.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Bobbi Lawlor-White, acting director of finance for Justice and Public Safety.

Hon. B. Thompson: Chair, I have some takebacks.

Chair: Perfect.

Committee, we are on page 140, at the bottom, about to carry the section.

Total Justice Policy, Planning, and FPT Relations: 3,588,300

Shall it carry? Carried.

Committee, do you want me to read every line for line or can we read the opening and the total and then go over it line for line?

An Hon. Member: I think that's fine.

Chair: Everybody's good?

Financial and Consumer Services

Total Regulatory Oversight: 1,189,600

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: I just noticed there's a line there called real estate trading. What does that mean?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Where, sorry?

K. Bernard: It's in the big book; I don't have it open to the right page. Oh, sorry. No, it isn't in the big book. It's right here. It's in the outline. It says: "...financial sector regulations, including: oversight of private and public capital raising activity, distribution of investment and insurance products and services, provincially-regulated deposit taking and lending, real estate trading, charitable gaming..."

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Okay, great. What was the question, sorry? Now that we figured that out. [Laughter]

K. Bernard: I'm just wondering what real estate trading means.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I do have a note on that.

[2:10 p.m.]

Hon. B. Thompson: That's to do with the *Real Estate Trading Act* and the real estate licensing.

K. Bernard: I'm just trying to wrap my brain around that. Could you give me an example of an activity that might involve?

Hon. B. Thompson: I think realtors have to renew their licence every year, and that goes through this department.

K. Bernard: Thank you for that.

Are there any new positions being added in this department?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yeah, we have one new position. It's a compliance and outreach worker. It's under the responsible gambling strategy.

K. Bernard: I'm wondering what provincial enforcement of payday lenders looks like. I'm just wondering, is it like a resource-intensive activity for the department?

Hon. B. Thompson: I'll have to bring that back, too.

K. Bernard: On that note, I just want to say thank you for those takebacks. It was very quick. Thank you.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We have a great staff helping us out.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Registry Services

Total Registry Services: 1,072,500

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

I notice this section speaks to four registry services: corporate and business names, vital stats, lobbyists, and personal property. So, land registry – not included in this section.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Not that I'm aware of, no.

M. MacFarlane: That being said, looking at the four that are covered, we had a proposal in our platform to remove the name search fees for incorporation name searches, the NUANS name searches. Is that in the works at all to make incorporating a little more affordable?

Hon. B. Thompson: Sorry, what platform?

M. MacFarlane: Green Party election platform.

Hon. B. Thompson: Oh, okay. Thank you. For land registry?

M. MacFarlane: This would be on the NUANS – N-U-A-N-S – the name search...

Hon. B. Thompson: We'll have to bring that back.

M. MacFarlane: ...under the business corporations fee. I was just wondering if there was anything included in the budget to eliminate those name search fees. There has been talk of it, not just in our...

Hon. B. Thompson: I think the land registry is under Finance. But we'll take back any information we have.

M. MacFarlane: Just a clarification on that. Did you say, minister, that the land registry is included in financial and consumer services?

Hon. B. Thompson: No, it's in Finance; Department of Finance.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. I don't want to belabour it. I think it's \$40 a name search now if you're going to incorporate or search for the existence of a name. Under the GeoLinc land registry search system, there was a move to a different platform where it's no longer a per-search basis. I was just wondering if there might be a move in this section so when you're searching business names – corporate names, partnership trade names – that the search fee would also be similarly either eliminated or reduced.

Hon. B. Thompson: Okay. We'll have to take that information back.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. That's all I had on the section.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just wondering if there are still fees associated with name and gender changes for Islanders who are transitioning; if there are still fees.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I have some notes on it, but I don't have that, so I'll have to take that back.

K. Bernard: Okay. And just while you're taking that back, if there are still changes,

two parts to that: Is there a plan to get rid of that fee? We've talked about that before. And also, how much money are we looking at? What sort of revenue do we get from that?

I'm good, Chair.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Financial and Consumer Services:
2,262,100

[2:15 p.m.]

Shall it carry? Carried.

Legal and Legislative Services

Total Legal and Legislative Services:
3,256,700

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

The line on professional services – last year there was a considerable spend further to what was budgeted, and then we're budgeting a little less. I wonder if you might have a comment on that line, please.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: On that line, we have staff under this department that take care of legal for government. So, we had somebody that was under that took care of the child protection aspect of that, but they ended up going elsewhere, so we lost that position and we had to go external for that. So, those are fees for that director of child protection work.

M. MacFarlane: So, that would be one example, I guess, where the department would go to external counsel. Are there other legal services that the department would seek to engage from external firms versus have the ability in house to provide?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Those would just be items that would be in conflict of interest or things of that nature. Maybe they can't deal with it right away and it's a pressing nature, but most of it would be dealt with in house if we are able to.

M. MacFarlane: So, did I hear you say there's an empty position and that's why it went outsourced?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yes.

M. MacFarlane: What position was that again? Child protection?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: It was just one of our – it's called a legal officer. One of those positions was vacant and it's a specialized position to fill. So, they are recruiting, trying to find somebody who will take that on.

Hon. B. Thompson: Do you have anybody interested?

M. MacFarlane: That's all I have.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Emergency Management
Organization: 2,802,500

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West
Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Just under the grant line, I just want to know why we overspent by \$1.3 million. I think I know, but....

Bobbi Lawlor-White: The department rolled out a fuel station resiliency grant program this year. So, in the forecast – that's the forecast of \$1.4 million, which was \$1.2 million over budget – that was for that new grant program; just a one-year program for generators for fuel stations.

G. McNeilly: So, that means that all the fuel stations, that would have been – the main fuel station here that didn't have generation power during Fiona now has a generator?

Hon. B. Thompson: I think there are – how many? Sixty-four?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We received 39 applications and had 36 approvals. So, 36 fuel stations that wouldn't have had generators –

Hon. B. Thompson: Now have or will have generators.

G. McNeilly: Excellent.

I'm just wondering – maybe I'll do this twice – professional services was underspent and so was salaries. Can you just talk about why those lines were underspent? Just doing them twice together.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: The professional services, it looks like we're underspent; we did actually spend what we had anticipated, however, when public accounts were done for fiscal year '22-23, they required us to do an accrual for any expected costs for Fiona at the time. So, those costs actually went back into '22-23 where we had budgeted them in '23-24. It's kind of convoluted.

And the salaries, sorry, is that your other one?

G. McNeilly: Yeah, the salaries were – but only by – well, \$100,000 I guess, almost.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: So, in the budget last year for '23-24, we had received four new positions. With the budget passing in June, there's just that delay in hiring.

G. McNeilly: And that's why we see the salaries up to \$1.3 million for the future?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That's part of it. There is a new position in here this year as well. We've added a position; it's called the internal DFAA auditor. That's for assistance to help with the Fiona claim and potentially any others that may arise; hopefully don't, but....

G. McNeilly: I could ask more questions, but I think that's good. Thanks. I just wanted to get an overview.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

I don't think the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty got on the professional services line. What is this funding going towards on the professional services line?

[2:20 p.m.]

Bobbi Lawlor-White: The majority of this would be the call centre services that are under 911. So, this rolls in the 911

department as well, and I had mentioned that the underspend was because of the accrual for fiscal year '22-23.

Then there was \$150,000 that we had in budget for '23-24 that was for Fiona-specific items that are done, so that's the reduction in the current budget estimate.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. So, \$150,000 went to the Fiona recommendations?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: There were two different reports that we had – that was the budget for those, sorry; review of EMO and then the *Fiona After Action Report*.

M. MacFarlane: So, am I right in understanding that the Fiona report got, from that total, roughly \$150,000?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Between the two, we had budgeted \$150,000. I don't think it came in quite that high. I think one came in at \$44,500. I don't have the notes on the other one. I don't think it was as high as that.

M. MacFarlane: Was that review done, the one that was the \$44,500? Did that get done, that review?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: The EMO model review – I think it's in a draft report right now just to be internally reviewed at this point but should be ready to go in the next few months.

Hon. B. Thompson: We can table anything we have.

M. MacFarlane: Was that report prepared with the intent of being a public report? A publicly releasable document?

Hon. B. Thompson: I'll have to take back whether that is....

M. MacFarlane: I never know, when there are reports, if they're meant to be released, if it's internal, or who can see them. That's why I was asking that question, I guess.

I guess sort of an overarching, higher question I have is with respect to – well, just with climate change and extreme weather events generally. Is there planning this year, or is there money in this budget for that?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Not specifically, but in budget '23-24, we did add four new positions. Those positions are hired or very close to being hired at this point. That includes a critical infrastructure officer, a business continuity officer; two of those. So, those positions will help in the planning internally.

Hon. B. Thompson: And we work with EECA as well on anything like that. And member, you are probably the only one here – because you're new – that hasn't had the EMO tour. So, I'll offer you, after the Legislature, a full tour of the EMO and the operations that take place.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you for that. My colleague here said it would be well worth doing that, so I would look forward to that opportunity.

I think that's all I have on this section, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just wondering, we had talked in the Legislature before about a vulnerable persons registry to just kind of have a finger on the pulse of any individuals who may be vulnerable in the face of a natural disaster or some sort of crisis: people who live alone; people who may be on medications that require electricity or medication to be kept cold.

I'm wondering if there's any funding in this budget to go towards that. I do know that there are organizations that kind of have their own, but I was wondering about a provincial level.

Hon. B. Thompson: This was part of our MERT discussions – the Cabinet committee of multiple departments on emergency response team – and we are working through that listing there, so there wouldn't be anything in this budget, but anything that I have on that I can take back, for sure.

K. Bernard: I'd really appreciate that. I think it's really interesting. It would be such an asset.

My last question is just on the salaries line. There's roughly \$300,000. Is that a new position, and if so, what would that position be?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That's the new position I mentioned earlier, the internal DFAA auditor. That person will kind of go around within – because the Fiona expenses were throughout different departments, so they'll kind of work within the different departments to ensure that we have the appropriate backup for the eventual final claim for Fiona.

K. Bernard: Okay, thank you.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Public Safety and Policing

[2:25 p.m.]

Total Public Safety: 32,213,400

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

Just looking at the professional services line again, I'd like to look at that. There's an increase – \$2.5 million. Could you go through that line with me, please?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: The majority of that line would be our contract with RCMP. That would be their operating increases that we approved for in budget for this fiscal year. It also includes the two RCMP officers for the PPU, Provincial Priorities Unit – traffic; one for impaired driving, as well. Those positions are built within that contract.

M. MacFarlane: That's the highway traffic positions, did I hear you say?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yes.

Hon. B. Thompson: Yes.

M. MacFarlane: Where does it factor into these items the contributions from the municipalities that don't have their own policing and they rely on the RCMP to serve that purpose?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: The cost would be within that agreement under professional

services, and then we do a bill back to those municipalities. That shows up on the revenue line within that division.

M. MacFarlane: Are you actively engaged with the municipalities about the efficacy of that particular service and the cost of providing it? I'm just wondering because in my own district, I've had some discussions with municipalities who struggle to afford it and struggle to see the benefit of it. The visibility is just not there sometimes for the enforcement side.

Hon. B. Thompson: It's a conversation that we're having regularly with the communities. Policing is getting more expensive. No matter if it's RCMP or municipal forces now, it seems the wages are increasing, which they need to, to attract more officers. But we have reduced the cost to Borden and Kinkora from the previous budget, I do know that.

M. MacFarlane: There's a line showing \$70,000 – I'm not sure if I have it right in front of me – for the Criminal Code Review Board. Do we know what the functions of that...? To me, that's federal. I'm wondering why we're spending that on this board.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Is that on the list? I'm not sure which book. The big book, maybe?

M. MacFarlane: Yeah, I'm just trying to find it again.

Hon. B. Thompson: That board is with our department, so I guess that's why the expenses are there.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yes, it is in the professional contract services. I wouldn't have the details on that though.

M. MacFarlane: That's fine. I guess I'm more interested, anyway, in the improved impaired driving enforcement that had about three quarters of a million dollars announced for it. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about what that would include; that funding.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Is that – that we discussed on Friday? Is that what you mean?

Hon. B. Thompson: That was in the policy section that we already passed, and then the two new officers are in this.

M. MacFarlane: Oh, that includes the two new officers?

Hon. B. Thompson: Yeah.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yes, that would be in this section.

Hon. B. Thompson: And their focus is impaired driving.

M. MacFarlane: I don't want to belabour it if we've already discussed it. I don't remember having that discussion on Friday, but that's a long time ago. Is there anything you can tell me about that? I don't want you to repeat yourself, but....

Hon. B. Thompson: Chair, he can review *Hansard*.

M. MacFarlane: I'm happy to do that, Chair, if, in fact, we did have that fulsome discussion on Friday on that.

[2:30 p.m.]

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I believe we did; I think.

M. MacFarlane: Okay.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: If we're thinking the same thing.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

I have a bunch of questions on this, but I'm not going to ask them. I'll just keep it high level.

The police review – I'm wondering if there are any of the recommendations funded in this budget.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: There is some money built in here for staff that are working on the review, as well as some funding to execute some of those items. So, there has been some high-level work done

on it. We're hoping that, as we move forward into this year, we'll be able to complete a few more, or a majority more of them.

Hon. B. Thompson: There's dedicated staff, too, working on the review.

K. Bernard: Just my last question: You had said by the end of the year, kind of, have most of them done. I don't want to put words in your mouth. Do we have a goal for when we'll have the majority of those implemented?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't have that note. I know that we have a steering committee working on that, as well as dedicated staff working on that. The focus has been to get the work completed as quickly as we can. There are a lot of things that are kind of linked together. In order to solve 14, 15, 16, we have to solve one, two, three first.

Hon. B. Thompson: The group meets weekly to work on this, but I can bring back their progress and some timelines.

K. Bernard: That would be great.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

S. Dillon: I just have a quick question. Does dispatch come out of that money, too? Out of the professional services?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Dispatch?

S. Dillon: When you want to call – I guess maybe that's part of 911, is it? When you have a call that you put into the police and then that dispatches the police to the call, is that part of that?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yeah, I believe that'd be under that professional services line that I spoke on earlier. That would be the call centre office.

S. Dillon: Thank you. That's good.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Conservation and Enforcement

Total Conservation and Enforcement:
1,041,400

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

“...carry out investigations and enforcement pursuant to environmental and wildlife legislation.” I’m wondering how many investigations would have been carried out this year.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don’t have that information, but we can bring that back.

K. Bernard: My last question: On the order paper, we have a bill coming forward to increase hunting days to include Sundays. I’m wondering if your department was consulted, and if so, what feedback was provided?

Hon. B. Thompson: We’ll have to bring that back.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: I guess my question is around the subject of whether – I guess my mind goes to the situation over across, with respect to the elvers, the baby eels, and what the situation is there, and the challenge that province has had with poaching of that resource, and if this department has – I know we don’t have that particular resource here, but do we have enough conservation officers? I assume this is the section; I asked before with the COs and that.

Hon. B. Thompson: I think we’re fully staffed – Bobbi? – and we have, really, a top-notch team of conservation officers who are doing a great job.

M. MacFarlane: As part of determining full staffing complement, does the department go out into the community, talk to other departments involved – obviously, in environment for one – to determine whether the enforcement complement is where it needs to be? I certainly don’t disagree that they do a wonderful job. I used to work with them in the courtroom. But I’m also conscious of the fact that – you know,

looking across the pond at the other issues that we’re seeing with conservation – it’s so important.

I’m wondering, how does the government plan to ensure that the needs are met from both conservation but also the balance needed for the COs to be able to do their job?

Hon. B. Thompson: That’s not really a budget question, but I will answer it. They work closely with the environmental officers in EECA, and they work closely with the environmental and agricultural officers as well. They meet regularly; they’re in are full conversation, fully compatible with everything they do. So, I think we have really great teamwork there to protect.

[2:35 p.m.]

They were busy yesterday; I think they had 300-some checks yesterday and only two charges. So, they were busy yesterday on the first day of angling.

M. MacFarlane: My last question on it would be – I see the section is pretty broad, including *Unlawful Property Act*, *Pesticides Control Act*, *Fisheries Act*, *Wildlife Conservation Act*, *Migratory Birds Convention Act*, EPA.

To me – and this is sort of the foundation of where my questions are coming from – we’re only budgeting salaries of \$878,000 for the enforcement of all of those pieces of legislation. I don’t know how they do it, when you look at the variety of what they’re tasked with in the mandate. Maybe I don’t have a question; maybe it’s a comment that I just hope that we keep our eye on that they’re not being either overworked, or that there are needs not being met.

Hon. B. Thompson: We’ll definitely monitor that, but we’re good budgeters.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Provincial Coroner Services

Total Provincial Coroner Services: 795,200

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

What is the complement of coroners?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We have four coroners currently, including the chief.

Hon. H. Perry: Is that a full complement?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I know that we have one new to appoint. That just has to go through a process of approval.

Hon. H. Perry: So, do we know what a full complement is though?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't, personally, but we could take that back.

Hon. B. Thompson: We do have a new chief coroner, Dr. Webber.

Hon. H. Perry: Do you have any idea of response times – if there are many complaints about response times or if response times have decreased?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't have those stats.

Hon. B. Thompson: We can bring any of that back.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you.

The other question is: There was talk in the past several years because of – I guess let's just talk about my district being so far from, let's say, Charlottetown, and sometimes the response time is a few hours. There was talk about field officers. Has that gotten any further where maybe nurses or paramedics or police officers could be trained? Has that gotten anywhere?

Hon. B. Thompson: Well, we've done a complete review of the coroners office and we're just starting to implement that now. The chief coroner is going to look into building contingency in the coroners office and he's doing a good job so far, but any information on that, we'll definitely take back.

Hon. H. Perry: Okay, that's fine. Thanks, Chair.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Public Safety and Policing:
34,050,000

Shall it carry? Carried.

Legal Aid

Total Legal Aid: 2,629,300

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

I think this did come up in Question Period not too long ago with respect to the increase in eligibility, which is wonderful to see, of course, and needs to be an annual thing, and it needs to be more, quite frankly.

But I think that the question still remains about – there's not a significant increase to the section, and the obvious question is: If we make the eligibility more accessible for people, do we then need to commensurately increase the funding available to the department's section to provide the service without overworking the wonderful Legal Aid lawyers who are on staff?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Legal Aid historically has run short staffed, so we're finally at a point where we are fully staffed. Seeing as that's just a guideline – this is new to the budget this year – it's definitely something we'll keep an eye on, but we don't really have the historical to add a new position at this point when it has been historically hard to recruit into this division. We're glad to see that we're fully staffed and hope that the team can handle any increase.

M. MacFarlane: So, in a case where you would monitor workflow and capacity, there's a line for professional services; \$354,700 would be for external counsel to sort of help out?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Correct, yeah.

M. MacFarlane: I appreciate the challenge in getting lawyers to come and do that. Very valuable work.

[2:40 p.m.]

Is there any other contemplation in the budget – I don't see it, but I'll ask the question – for any new areas of law, or Legal Aid might be expanded? Criminal and family are really all there is, but is there consideration for budgeting for whether it's someone to assist with landlord/tenant issues...? A vulnerable population lawyer was talked about.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Not in this budget. I'm not sure which year it was, but we did add a vulnerable person lawyer – I think it was maybe two years ago – so that position is in classification now and we'll hope to have that posted soon, once it gets through that classification process.

M. MacFarlane: The job description for that has been created. Are you able to talk a little bit about that?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I'm not sure. I don't have that. It's with classification with the Public Service Commission at the moment. I'm not sure if we're allowed to share that at this point, but if we can, we can bring that back.

M. MacFarlane: That's great to hear because I understood that that had been talked about for a little bit. Great to hear it's coming forward. I mentioned expanding the breadth of Legal Aid to landlord/tenant. I know immigration is a big issue to provide support for newcomers and immigration law issues. Is there any thought to continue further with this?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Not within this budget. I do have a note that PT governments continue to advocate for improved access to immigration Legal Aid services, but that would be the only note that I have on that.

M. MacFarlane: Sorry, who was it that continued to advocate?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Provinces and territory governments, sorry. Too many acronyms.

M. MacFarlane: On that point, how much money do we get from the federal counterpart to administer the program?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: In fiscal year '23-24, we have \$446,000, and then in '24-25, we have \$430,000.

M. MacFarlane: And that goes directly into this section to deliver the service?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: It does. It shows as a revenue line. What you have, I think, in front of you is just expenses at this point.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair. That's all.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Crown Attorneys

Total Crown Attorneys: 2,006,200

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: I just have one quick question on this section, Chair, and that's just, again, determining staffing complement and what metrics are used to determine if – because we're seeing across the country, if there are delays in cases being brought forward, they're thrown out and charges stayed. We don't want to get to that point in this province.

How do we monitor the workflow and make sure that the case processing times are such that we're not going to get hit with a motion to dismiss a case?

Hon. B. Thompson: We're in pretty good shape here. We're fully staffed and we're probably amongst the best of any provinces for efficiency; the access to the courts.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Community and Correctional Services

Division Management

Total Division Management: 1,369,200

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

I know that there were significant numbers of complaints that went through the

Ombudsperson's office about the correctional facilities. I'm wondering if there's any mudget – "mudget" [Laughter]; let's just shorten that; money in the budget, "mudget" – if there's any money in the budget to support – oh my God, I'm sorry; it's not midnight sittings and I'm losing it – to support that work, the recommendations that came from the Ombudsperson's office.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Nothing specifically, but I think most of that work could be built into any of the operating lines that we have, or if it was capital in nature, it would be built into those.

Hon. B. Thompson: We do have a good relationship with the ombudsman. After her first report, we did address all her concerns. We continue to have that good relationship. It's a situation where there's always going to be complaints, but you have to take everything seriously and deal with them.

[2:45 p.m.]

K. Bernard: And to give credit where credit is due, I know that's one thing that, I think it was the Ombudsperson, or the report itself, that says – especially as it pertained to the corrections services in PEI – how quickly and efficiently those were dealt with. So, thank you. That's a really important office. They do important work, and just as important is the response to that, so thank you to your department for that.

Under professional services, there's \$17,000 for improvements to emergency protection orders. I'm wondering if you can tell us what improvements were made to those.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I do not have that with me, but we can bring that back.

K. Bernard: Okay, thank you.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Adult Correctional Centres

Total Adult Correctional Centres:
12,173,700

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

Just, perhaps, quickly on the materials, supplies, and services line; it looks like there was almost half a million dollars overspent last year. Do you know what was about?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yes, that's rising food costs and household items that the inmates would need. On that, we do have a little bit higher – I want to say occupancy; I'm not sure if that's the right terminology, but that has been on the rise this year compared to when we did the budget as well. So, it would fluctuate based on how many people would be there.

M. MacFarlane: So, yes, obviously that line would go up based on the population being serviced. What are those services that would be provided for? How do you determine for the inmate population – if that's the line where that comes from?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Do you mean within that line itself?

M. MacFarlane: Yeah, you mentioned food, but I guess there's more than...

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yeah, there would be some drug and vaccines in there as well. So, we're seeing an increase in that. The opioid replacement therapy would be in there as well. The costs on that were about \$92,000 for the last fiscal year, and that was a new program that came out in June of 2023.

M. MacFarlane: So, within the salaries line here, obviously that includes the COs, the correctional officers, and I suppose administrative support, but is there addiction staff? You mentioned opioid services.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: No, not addiction staff specifically. We do have some medical staff – nurses – within there as well. I don't know if they would be the point, but they would be the ones who would be administering.

M. MacFarlane: I believe on a per-capita basis, our province unfortunately has a distinction of having a higher than national average of incarcerated individuals per our population. I see you're both nodding; I think that's a true statistic.

Is this the section where we might see some efforts or spend on diversionary measures, whether it's within the salaries or...?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: This would be more operational for the correctional centres. Within our Divisional Management one that we just passed, there would be some positions in there.

M. MacFarlane: Which section was that?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: The one we just passed; the Division Management.

M. MacFarlane: Okay, I won't go back in time on that.

Do we know the average daily cost to house an inmate in Prince Edward Island?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't think – I know I've seen that stat, but I don't think I have that with me.

Hon. B. Thompson: We can bring that back.

M. MacFarlane: I'd be interested to have that, if you could.

I guess another question I have is just with the women's expansion unit. Is that done?

Hon. B. Thompson: It is, yeah. It's open. And member, I can offer you a tour of those facilities as well. Maybe we'll take a day and we'll do some touring.

M. MacFarlane: My mother was a correctional officer there for 20 years; I had that tour as young child.

Hon. B. Thompson: Not the new unit.

M. MacFarlane: I learned what I needed to learn at that time. It's up and running, it's working well?

Hon. B. Thompson: Yeah, really well.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Probation Services

Total Probation Services: 1,667,900

Shall it carry? Carried.

[2:50 p.m.]

Youth Justice Services

Total Youth Justice Services: 3,256,200

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: I guess I'm a little struck at the amount. I wonder if you could explain what programs are available under this section for the \$3.25 million.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Under here, there would be – I'm just going to go high level because there are a lot of details within this – youth probation, alternative residential placements, outreach workers, and Youth Intervention Outreach Program. There would be some Student Well-Being Teams in here as well.

M. MacFarlane: Yeah, and then probably 95 percent is salary related.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yeah, exactly; 91. Pretty close.

M. MacFarlane: The Summerside centre – is there another?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That's in a different section. The PEI Youth Centre is a different section.

M. MacFarlane: What's the PEI Youth Centre?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That would be the youth correctional facility.

Hon. B. Thompson: In Summerside.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. So, none of this applies to...? Not even staffing?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: No, that'd be in the PEI Youth Centre section, which I think is in one or two sections.

M. MacFarlane: Sure. Is there new staff contemplated? Because I see a bit of a salary increase.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: No, that's just our collective agreement rate increase built in.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. Would this be the section – outreach program, student wellbeing. I guess I’m wondering what sort of metrics are kept as far as if there’s success being achieved with diversionary measures to.... How do you monitor that? How do you measure that?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That’s a good question. I just have statistics on caseload. I wouldn’t have the metrics on that, but I’m sure that’s something that we could bring back.

M. MacFarlane: I don’t expect you to do that homework. I guess I’m wondering at a high level, do you feel that the current programs that are in place are actually achieving the goals based on the statistics that you’re keeping with respect to youth because I know you hear...

Hon. B. Thompson: Chair, budget question?

M. MacFarlane: ...there’s always youth, as there is with adults, going through the system. I’m just wondering if you can.... This seems to me to be the section where we would really emphasize the spend, which is great to have that much spend if it’s actually achieving the goal of keeping youth out of the system.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We can bring that high level back. Again, I don’t have that necessarily.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

Obviously, this section, we want to do everything we can for youth so that trend doesn’t continue into adulthood. You had mentioned Student Well-Being Teams. I’m assuming not all of the positions for the Student Well-Being Teams would be funded through Justice.

Hon. B. Thompson: No.

K. Bernard: There would just be specific ones. Can you just tell me which ones would be funded through Justice?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We have 20 school outreach workers within this division. They’re just noted as an outreach worker.

K. Bernard: Would you have there, as well, how many vacancies there are?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We have one temporary vacancy.

K. Bernard: Just a comment: that’s really great because I know Student Well-Being Teams in other areas – the positions are not filled. So, that’s great.

I’m good, Chair. Thank you.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Electronic Supervision

Total Electronic Supervision: 394,500

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Again, the professional services line was more than twice what was budgeted, and then we’re back to the budgeted amount from last year. Could you explain that line, please?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Those would be our fees for the electronic supervision bracelets and Prime Mobile fees. When we did the forecast, it was a point in time, and we just missed a credit that we were receiving from Interministerial Women’s Secretariat. So, we actually did come in closer to budget on that. It would have just been a bit of a forecasting error.

[2:55 p.m.]

M. MacFarlane: On the salaries line, too, there was....

Bobbi Lawlor-White: No, that’s not an error. Just the demand has been higher than the – we have two full-time positions in there, so we’ve had to hire some temporary staff to help out with the demand.

M. MacFarlane: I guess my next question was how the program is working. It sounds like it’s working pretty well. There was a recent case in the media that was a bit high profile about a request, I think, to enhance the service around the electronic monitoring.

If there were going to be some changes made to the administration of it, is this the section that would speak to that?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yes, this would be it. I believe this used to be part of a different division. It's been pulled out into its own just to get a little more visibility on it internally, as well.

Hon. B. Thompson: The service works well. We're the same as every other jurisdiction on monitoring the bracelets.

M. MacFarlane: I think that's all I had.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

PEI Youth Centre

Total PEI Youth Centre: 2,743,700

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: I see now the section. Obviously, this has nothing to do with the structure itself, the centre itself, which would be capital. These are salaries. All of these lines are specific to the youth centre in Summerside, the facility in Summerside?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Correct.

M. MacFarlane: Do you know the occupancy of the...?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I know there are five youth in custody as of today.

Hon. B. Thompson: A lot of times it's zero, but currently it's about two years.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yeah, about 19 percent for the year, occupancy.

M. MacFarlane: Which is great, but it makes it tough to budget for the operation of it. We hope it's less than –

Hon. B. Thompson: Yeah, and we're required by federal law to have it.

M. MacFarlane: Anything planned for the facility?

Hon. B. Thompson: Before the women's unit was up and going, we did have women stay there. That worked out well. It's always going to be something that we'll be monitoring, and possibly some changes down the road.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Sorry, it just sparked a conversation we were having. Just really quick, not fully related to budget; I do apologize.

I know when the women were on the other side, like we talked about last time, it was a really great experience for everybody. Now there's that empty side, I'm assuming, where the women were before. What is that space used for now?

Hon. B. Thompson: Weekenders.

K. Bernard: Oh, yes. Okay.

Thank you, Chair.

Hon. B. Thompson: Remands.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Victim Services

Total Victim Services: 1,715,600

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: How many full-time staff does this section carry?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We have 15 full-time.

M. MacFarlane: Is that a fairly static and consistent number?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I know it's fluctuated a little bit throughout the last few years. Since 2019, there's been five positions added. There is some federal funding that has offset some of those, plus we've added a few through the budget process.

M. MacFarlane: Similar questions that I've asked before: How do you measure the

workload or the caseload, case files, of these particular workers? We see fairly complex crimes now. My mind goes to the Dawson Funeral Home and the number of victims who were part of that unfortunate situation, to say the least; there were 66 counts. All of those victims had to be worked with and sort of steered through the process for two and a half years.

How do you monitor the workload of the victims workers who do an incredibly important job?

[3:00 p.m.]

Hon. B. Thompson: We have a close working relationship with Jayelee Grady, who's the director. She does a tremendous job of efficiency and making sure that the workload is spread out evenly. She's a very good manager, and if she needs more support, it's definitely something that we will work with her to get.

M. MacFarlane: So, just sort of as a catch-all on that, given what we see with the number of victims and the complexity of cases, does the department look at what initiatives might need to be implemented to keep up with the times, to keep up with the crimes, to keep up with the special needs that victims might have if we're looking at either fraud cases, seniors scams, and those sorts of things?

How does the department keep pace with the new age of crime and types of victims you might see?

Hon. B. Thompson: They do tremendous work. I can't brag about this group of individuals enough, our victim services team. Is it enough? No, it's never going to be enough. As you said, our crimes keep coming, they keep elevating to the next level, and we have to keep up.

Like I said, with our relationship with the director, Jayelee, we have the utmost respect in her. She meets with us regularly to ensure that we are providing her with adequate staff and training. They deal with the utmost horrific crimes, and they have to go through an immense amount of training themselves. So, we're kept up to date on that, and we will keep working with them.

M. MacFarlane: That's great, thank you.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clinical Services

Total Clinical Services: 1,398,300

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: I guess I'm just not sure exactly what this section – what the mandate is. I'm reading the description. Could you explain a little bit about what this section fulfills?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yes. The clinical service team is a provincial resource which provides assessment and treatment to offenders and high-risk community members. The target population of the team are primarily adults and youth involved in the justice system. Self-referrals are accepted, as well as referrals from other agencies.

There are a few programs, as well, in here: Emotional Regulation, Sexual Offence Assessment and Treatment, and Turning Point, and intimate partner violence program for men.

Hon. B. Thompson: That includes a mental health therapist, a youth and family therapist, a clinical service therapist, a risk/need coordinator, a Turning Point coordinator, a domestic violence clinician, and a sexual offence assessment and treatment specialist.

M. MacFarlane: There's lots of overlap with multiple sections there. I'm hearing health, social....

Hon. B. Thompson: That's why Justice is a well-run department.

M. MacFarlane: [Laughter] That's a great answer. That encapsulates a lot of different things.

Hon. B. Thompson: As soon as someone is incarcerated, they go through an evaluation of what services that incarcerated person needs. Every day they go in, they're planning for the day that they get out. So, these are the services that are assessed, and that we can help our offenders not reoffend.

M. MacFarlane: So, that's during time in custody?

Hon. B. Thompson: That's in custody, yeah.

M. MacFarlane: What section might speak to – I guess it was Probation Services – after custody? Would that be fair to say that this stops upon release, this section? There might be some carryover, but –

Hon. B. Thompson: This section, yeah. It's while you're incarcerated until the day you're released. Then Probation Services, that we already passed, deals with probation.

M. MacFarlane: But probation would be if you're on probation as part of your sentence, and you would work with a probation worker.

[3:05 p.m.]

But if your sentence ends and you're not subject to a term of probation, and this section ends upon release from the facility, is there any section in the budget that speaks to ensuring, post-custody, how the inmate, how the person does on the outside? Does it end? It just ends at that point?

Hon. B. Thompson: That's our Probation Services; that's their role. After custody, you're on probation. That's the role of a probation officer on our team. But we'll take back that process so we can show you.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. Thank you, that's great.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Community and Correctional Services:
24,719,100

Shall it carry? Carried.

Family Law, Court Services, Access and Privacy Services Office

Total Division Management: 1,034,600

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: What reference or inclusion is there to Family Law in this section? How does that...?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Family Law has its own section.

M. MacFarlane: What's covered under that that wouldn't be under Family Legal Aid, for example?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: In Family Law, sorry?

M. MacFarlane: That's my question; what's the reference to Family Law here? What does it cover? What's included in that?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Oh, sorry.

Hon. B. Thompson: This is the Children's Lawyer section – Family Court Services and Children's Lawyer.

M. MacFarlane: Where is the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate?

Hon. B. Thompson: That's in the Legislative Assembly budget.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. Does this section include maintenance enforcement?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That's under Family Law, as well; a different section.

Hon. B. Thompson: Two more sections to go.

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

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

R. Henderson: Maybe I might be in the wrong section, too, but when it comes to maintenance enforcement for child support, for disabled adult children – maybe the minister is aware of a particular situation in my district where the person is having a hard time getting supports from her ex-husband who's from off-Island.

Are you finding that there's a lot of problems with that? Have we kept up on those issues? I'm coming back to the salaries question, here. Do you have enough people in place to be able to handle that issue?

Hon. B. Thompson: That's in two sections.

R. Henderson: Am I in the wrong section?

Hon. B. Thompson: Yeah.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That's in Family Law, in two sections.

R. Henderson: Family Law in two more sections?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I think it's two more, yeah. In my book, it's two more.

R. Henderson: I'm a bit lost here, but –

Chair: I'll put a note beside it, O'Leary-Inverness, and let you know when we're on it.

R. Henderson: Maybe I'm in the wrong – page 148?

Chair: We're on Division Management on 147.

R. Henderson: Oh, sorry about that, okay. The Family Law twice confused me.

Sorry about that, Chair.

Chair: Not a problem.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Office of the Public Trustee and Official Public Guardian

Total Office of the Public Trustee and Official Public Guardian: 808,400

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

Just a couple of questions. I am a little surprised that there's not a lot of money allocated to the important work that the office provides. Do you keep track of what the caseload might be in this area to determine appropriateness?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I do have the caseload. This is as of March 15th: 298 public trustee and public guardian clients and 57 office of the guardian clients.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you for that. Is there a dollar amount under the care of the public trustee?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: For 2023, the assets were \$16 million. They report, I believe, on a calendar year, not fiscal.

M. MacFarlane: Do you know at what point, if any, the funds would escheat to the Crown? Would the government have claim to those funds? Is there an audit that's done yearly to see if the funds are there for a certain period of time?

Hon. B. Thompson: The Auditor General audits it every year.

[3:10 p.m.]

M. MacFarlane: – And do you know if the Province has a line for – there's \$16 million there – is there a line that we can see if funds come into the public coffers that aren't otherwise claimed or collected?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I believe that would just be under General Government. It wouldn't necessarily be in our division, to my knowledge.

Hon. B. Thompson: We can bring that back, though.

M. MacFarlane: That's all I have.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Family Law

Total Family Law: 2,952,500

The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

R. Henderson: Minister, just regarding – like I said – a constituent had disabled adult children and separated from her spouse, and he's in another province, and she's having a heck of a time trying to get her money.

I know she's been working a bit with your department, but I'm just wondering; are there resources there to deal with these out-of-province situations? I know it's a very unique situation, and I think you're somewhat familiar with the case. I believe she's been in contact with you, too. Anyway, any update on that?

Hon. B. Thompson: Well, we're always conducting a needs assessment for maintenance enforcement. It's challenging work, it really is. We see some of the most difficult cases, but in general, it works really well. These are high-conflict situations a lot of the time that we're dealing with, so we're always assessing if we can do more, but out-of-province seems to be the biggest challenge for us.

R. Henderson: Do you have any kind of like a mutual agreement with other provinces, or is that a possible solution where you can search people from another province here, and vice versa in say, Alberta and places of that nature? Because that seems to be where the – I'm not expecting your department to send people out to Alberta to try to track somebody down for some money, but there needs to be some process that allows them their constitution to get what's coming from them.

What seems to be happening is that the person then starts to negotiate with your department to say, "Well, okay, I'll give you this much," a less amount than what they originally entitled to, and once again, that creates a bad taste in everybody's mouth as well. I get why you'd do that, but there needs to be an agreement between all the provinces on dealing with that.

What's your sense on that, or is there any direction that that's heading in?

Hon. B. Thompson: Well, that's something we've had discussions at FPT. It's challenging. Every province is dealing with the same situation, so they don't really answer our calls when they're dealing with the same situation. So, we do have to try to work on an agreement with other provinces to see what we can do.

Specific cases, I can't really comment on that, but yeah.

R. Henderson: No, I appreciate you not being able to comment on any individual cases. But I guess, at the end of the day, if you felt that another salaried position, even to have somebody on the road then to go track these people down – would that make a difference? And once again, it may be a way to cut the budget down the road, if you

can come up with a mutual agreement with other provinces.

So, I know it's a tough question. I know it's not an easy answer for you by any means, but I just think that that's an issue I'm running into a bit more than I'm used to. People are more transitional – a lot of people working out west and a lot of people moving here – and they have previous relationships in another place, and now all of a sudden maintenance support ends, and now they're in a financial issue here.

I know in this particular case, the children went from teenagers to then adulthood, but they're disabled, and now they can't get any money.

Hon. B. Thompson: Yeah, we're not afraid to add support or resources. It's a free service that we offer, and we'll continue to assess that. If we have to add more, we will.

R. Henderson: Okay.

Thanks, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Just perhaps further on that, I've worked lots with the child support officers in the court system, and they're amazing resources for people who are trying to collect their rightful entitlement on child support from the other parent. Looking at the salaries line, it seems we were under what was budgeted for last year.

[3:15 p.m.]

I'd have a question as to why – if there was perhaps a position that wasn't filled – and we're not budgeting a lot more for this year. Could you speak a little bit about that?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Last year there were a few temporary vacancies. One was a family court counsellor and one was a senior enforcement officer. They were just temporary – a little bit of the nature of this division – and the budget increase this year is just the collective agreement increases. So, we didn't add any new positions.

M. MacFarlane: Those positions, as I say, are so important for people because if you

don't have access to those officers in the court, you're going out of pocket to spend on a private lawyer, and Legal Aid doesn't help when it comes to collecting on child support arrears, so you're stuck having to pay a fair amount of money to pursue a court application through your own resources if those positions aren't filled.

I think last year, PEI had \$12 million in total amount of unpaid support. Do we have an update on what that number is currently?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't believe I have that....

It's actually about the same, yeah; right around that \$12 million.

M. MacFarlane: I know we can't talk about anything specific, but do we have an idea of how many families or recipients are included in that grand total?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't believe I have that breakdown.

Hon. B. Thompson: We can take that back.

M. MacFarlane: The Auditor General has done some audits of the program and made recommendations. Do we have an update on what recommendations may have been implemented by the Auditor General to improve the system?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't have that information with me, no.

Hon. B. Thompson: We can bring that back.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. Under professional services, there was a small amount. I think it was less than \$10,000 or about \$10,000. I can try and see where that went... It was for examining barriers for accessing family justice in PEI. Were there conclusions reached?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't have that report, but we could take that back.

M. MacFarlane: Okay, thank you.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Court and Sheriff Services

Total Court and Sheriff Services: 4,567,500

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Again, I guess my questioning would be similar to before. What we're asking our court and sheriff services to do is becoming increasingly complex, and oftentimes adversarial, when it comes to enforcing on judgements, repossessing, seizing assets.

I guess I wonder the consultation that's done with the department and the sheriff, and the sheriff population, about whether they're getting the support they need to do an increasingly difficult job. The salaries line has increased by \$500,000. I'm wondering, is that in recognition of that?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: No. In this section, the salary line is up \$175,000. Court and Sheriff Services – that would just be our collective agreement increase.

Hon. B. Thompson: And our HR would look at it. Human resources department looks for – Justice looks at it.

M. MacFarlane: No, that's fine. I just wanted to raise that point, Chair.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

PEI Judiciary

Total PEI Judiciary: 2,006,700

Shall it carry? Carried.

Access and Privacy Services Office

Total Access and Privacy Services Office: 785,400

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Hon. B. Thompson: Now, I know you have Michele Beaton's computer there, so.... [Laughter]

M. MacFarlane: Yeah, Michele Beaton would like to know.... [Laughter] Thank you, Chair.

What is the average time, do you have, to process a request under this section?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: For 2023, 62 percent of requests were answered within 30 days, 28 were answered within 60 days, and 10 percent were answered over 61 days.

[3:20 p.m.]

M. MacFarlane: So, obviously you have comparative year-over-year for running years. How are we doing on the response time?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't have last year's with me, but I believe when I was putting it together, it was improving. But I don't have that in front of me.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. I'd be interested in something simple, a simple table or something – if that was something that could be disclosed – just showing the wait times, because it does seem like it's not getting shorter, but maybe the data would show otherwise.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yeah, we can bring that back.

M. MacFarlane: Going back a few years, the 2019 PC platform did include a commitment to eliminate the initial FOIPP fee of \$5. Has that yet been done?

Hon. B. Thompson: I think we've moved to 2023 platform.

M. MacFarlane: Did that get picked up in the 2023 platform?

Hon. B. Thompson: I don't believe it was in the 2023, no.

R. Henderson: There's an expiry date on these platform commitments. [Laughter]

They spoil after a while.

M. MacFarlane: After four years, they disappear. [Laughter]

Hon. B. Thompson: We can table our PC platform if you wish.

M. MacFarlane: I have them, I think.

I think there's a review of the FOIPP act planned. I don't know if it was last year or if it's coming up this year. Is that still

underway, and is there funding in the budget to further that review?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: The review is due in 2024. Those would be the only notes I have on it. There's nothing specific in the budget for that.

M. MacFarlane: So, if there's nothing specific in the budget, is it reasonable to expect that the review could be completed?

Hon. B. Thompson: I believe it's a legislative review; a Legislative Assembly review. It's not in our department, no.

M. MacFarlane: That's all I have there.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Family Law, Court Services, and Access and Privacy Services Office:
12,155,100

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Department of Justice and Public Safety: 88,184,400

Shall it carry? Carried.

Department of Social Development and Seniors.

Minister, did you want to take a stranger to the floor?

Hon. B. Ramsay: I sure do.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

If we could have the stranger state her name and position for Hansard, please.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: My name is Trish Cameron-McDonald, I am the CFO for the Department of Social Development and Seniors.

Chair: Thank you.

Minister and Deputy Minister's Office

Total Minister and Deputy Minister's Office: 443,100

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: We are on page 154, members.

M. MacFarlane: Hi, good afternoon.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Good afternoon.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you for coming in.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Absolutely.

M. MacFarlane: So, the department is called Social Development and Seniors, but we don't see a specific section for seniors. It seems to be included with the strategy and policy. It may be a question for the minister. Why is there no dedicated section for seniors?

[3:25 p.m.]

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Currently we are structured to have seniors primarily in the Strategy, Policy, and Seniors. You'll see seniors' food in that section. We also have, in social programs, the seniors independence program. It's something we've talked about around the senior management team, that perhaps we need to consolidate seniors all in one division; however, at this time, it's not currently. This is the structure at this time.

But it is a very good point. It's one that senior management team has discussed a few times. It's a bit of a challenge of pulling seniors independence out of social programs because we use the payment processing software.

M. MacFarlane: So, what would it look like if it was pulled out? What would you contemplate it look like, if it was not included where it's at? How best could this section be met, because it's an important – it goes without saying, it's complex. Should it have its own department altogether?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Or its own division, yes, and it has been under consideration. There are some administrative pieces that would need to be sorted out to make that accomplishment, and it's still under consideration by the senior management team. Very good point; very valuable point.

M. MacFarlane: I appreciate that. Thank you.

Hon. B. Ramsay: And the fact that it's just one year old. This program is just new – Social Development and Seniors was – as of last April. So, good point.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Just to follow up on that, we were Social Development and Housing, and we've spent the last year working through the separation and having Housing move on to a new department.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Strategy, Policy, and Seniors

Total Strategy, Policy, and Seniors:
9,607,800

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

It sort of was helpful when the chair read out the section because it gave us a chance to sort of read along with it, but I'm not complaining. [Laughter]

I might just need a second. Did the Child and Youth Advocate make any budget recommendations that may have been captured in this section?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Child and Family Services would be the section where the Child and Youth Advocate would have....

M. MacFarlane: Okay. I'll make a note that when we get there – Karla will make a note on that.

I often ask about any deviations in the budget. Looking at the salaries line, it looks like we were under by about \$400,000 last year. Is that due to challenges in staffing?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Yes. We've been experiencing recruitment and retention challenges throughout the department; this division certainly one of them as well.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. Why would that be? Are the positions competitive across the country? Are there overlapping capabilities and functions of the particular staff? I guess

I'd wonder what would make it challenging in this particular sector.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Can you rephrase that? I'm just trying to think of how I can tie – it sounds very much like an HR question. I'm just trying to see how I can tie it into – how it relates to budget.

M. MacFarlane: If there's something we need to be doing differently and budgeting for to attract the particular skillset of worker to meet the needs of this section, whether it's a different approach to recruiting, if it's putting money into the recruiting and marketing and hiring... I'm surprised that... We often talk about the frontline health care worker, given the competitive nature of those positions; other sections, we talk about the highly skilled section.

Is that the reason why we're struggling to fill these positions? Because the positions are so specialized?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: We work very closely with the Public Service Commission and the HR within our department. We are experiencing a challenge recruiting and retaining throughout the entire department. We do have money in here for a targeted recruitment coordinator who's been supporting – it's primarily for Child and Family Services, but he's available for questions on other divisions as well.

[3:30 p.m.]

So, speaking from a budget perspective, yes, we do work very closely with the Public Service Commission, the HR within our department, and we've hired a targeted recruitment coordinator. Even in prior years, we've hired agencies to help us recruit.

M. MacFarlane: That takes me to the next section then, the professional services. There was a line for consulting, did that fit in with what you were indicating?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Yeah, we do have a general consulting budget that we would use from year to year, and that is where we've sourced the budget for those recruitment efforts. Currently it's an individual; in the past it's been a consulting firm that have helped us.

M. MacFarlane: There are also funds for security services. Is that additional security at the public seniors' homes? Is that what that line would be referring to?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Are you looking at our handouts?

M. MacFarlane: Yeah.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: The security, I believe, is out of the social programs. Is that right?

Is it on SDS, page 3, at the top?

M. MacFarlane: Yes.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: That's the next section, is that okay?

Chair: I'll put you down on that section for that, hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

Welcome back, Trish. Good to see you. I always get excited when I see the strangers. It was crazy to be here until midnight those three nights in a row, but there was some fun had.

On the grants, I'm wondering; can you give us a brief overview of the grants under corporate services? I'm just wondering what initiatives they may support.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Are you speaking of the \$500,000 line?

K. Bernard: Yeah, sorry.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: That's our social sector supports fund. It's designed to provide funding for a project, not long-term funding, so it can be different from year to year. This current year, more than half of the spend went towards helping non-government organizations acquire generators or have emergency plans.

K. Bernard: So, the food security grants. Does the government feel, given the poverty elimination strategy to eliminate food

insecurity by – oh my gosh, I can't remember the date, but you know. Do we feel that this budgeted amount is going to be enough to ensure that we hit that target?

Hon. B. Ramsay: So, for food; school food and seniors' food, and all our food programs.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Yes.

K. Bernard: Is the Seniors' Food Program Pilot covered in this section?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Yes, we have \$250,000 for the seniors' food program. The pilot was run last year, and we kept the \$250,000 budget in for the coming year as well.

K. Bernard: I know there was talk of a review happening. That \$250,000, I know the goal is to expand that Island-wide. Where are we with that? When would we go Island-wide?

Hon. B. Ramsay: With the seniors' food, it's Island-wide now. The grant program, the communal grant right now is Island-wide. Is that what you mean?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: We have currently \$250,000 in budget. Based on the prior year's spend, we did not require more at this time to increase that budget.

[3:35 p.m.]

We are continuing to work around the senior management team. We do believe this will be an area that will require an increase in the next management plan, next budget. If we're able to make advancements this year, then it is a priority.

K. Bernard: So, I'm kind of hearing that funding line is flexible as needed, as the program grows.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: It's \$250,000, and when we were trying to build the budget for the next year, we did not see the need at that time – which began last fall – for an increase. However, when we sit this fall and identify areas for an increase, I'm expecting that this will be a priority, that this budget will need to be increased for the next budget year.

K. Bernard: So, one of the things – we know that the uptake was really low, and don't for a second believe it's because the need isn't there. Is there any funding in this budget to kind of help with getting the word out? Some sort of education, or how –

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Yes.

K. Bernard: Yeah? Is there a plan for that?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: My apologies; as the finance person, I'm not always incredibly up to date with what the director for the program and his manager and his program analyst – I'm not sure if we have a formalized plan for the communication at this point, but I can tell you it's a constant item on our agendas, and it's being discussed and it's being worked on and I'm always impressed with the work that the team is doing. I can't speak to a specific plan. I'm not aware of a specific plan.

Hon. B. Ramsay: For getting the word out for seniors, we certainly are working towards that. As you know, when the House opened this time, I think we ran a two-week ad on *Compass*, and we posted I think in bus stops, and we did everything we could to – contacted the seniors' clubs and made sure that seniors were aware of access numbers to contact us for any programs that are available.

This one that we just ran across the Island, like I said in the House previously, we've had 50 clubs and organizations who are part of this seniors' food program that is way more successful than we thought it was going to be. We're really looking forward to it.

We're doing everything we can, and we'll continue to do what's necessary to get the word out to seniors, for sure.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

So according to your government, in 2021, there were 6,000 seniors living below the poverty level and I'm sure that's increased since then. How much money is being invested in this budget to get a more

accurate number of how many seniors are living below the poverty level?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: How much money is in this budget to determine how many seniors are living below the poverty –

Hon. H. Perry: Yes, because the last stats I have are from 2021 and that was 6,000.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: So, it would be primarily staff, salary costs – like the individuals on our team that would be. I'm trying to think of which particular staff would be doing that work.

Hon. H. Perry: Is that work being done?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Is that work being done? So, not how much money is in here to help it (Indistinct)....

Hon. H. Perry: Both.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Okay.

Hon. H. Perry: I was wondering if there's a budget line, then if there's not, you're saying staff is doing it. So then, is staff doing it?

Hon. B. Ramsay: There's a poverty elimination strategy that we're working on right now and what we're doing to eliminate poverty for seniors, the number of programs that I listed out, and I can do the same. I mean, I can tell you what we're doing, if that's the question you're asking.

Hon. H. Perry: No, I already know the programming. I'm looking at the actual number of seniors who are living below the poverty level today.

Hon. B. Ramsay: The number? Oh, 1,864.

Hon. H. Perry: So, you're telling me there are 1,864 seniors on Prince Edward Island living below the poverty level today? That's it?

Hon. B. Ramsay: Yeah. There are 35,000 seniors on Prince Edward Island, and 5.7 percent of seniors are living in poverty. Yeah, 5.1 percent. Those are the results that I have here.

Hon. H. Perry: According to your government, in 2021, there were 6,000 seniors living below the poverty level. And you're telling me now that it's just a few hundred?

Hon. B. Ramsay: Those are the stats that I have, member, yeah.

Hon. H. Perry: How are those stats compiled?

[3:40 p.m.]

It's great if that was the actual number, but I'm just asking about that number because I don't see that.

Hon. B. Ramsay: Yeah, and what we're doing to eliminate poverty are the number of programs that I can list if you'd like me to list them, and we have the Seniors Independence Initiative program. There are many things we're doing to ensure that seniors are being looked after.

Hon. H. Perry: But again, I know the programs. I'm just asking about, income-wise, the number of senior citizens who are living on Prince Edward Island that their annual income is below the poverty level.

Hon. B. Ramsay: Right. So, the numbers that I gave you, we rely on Stats Canada for that information. That's where that came from.

Hon. H. Perry: Okay, so Stats Canada has those. In 2021, it was your government that came up with the 6,000.

Hon. B. Ramsay: Yeah, sorry. I wasn't here. I couldn't – yeah, I can't....

Hon. H. Perry: Yeah, I know you weren't here, but you took it over, so you take on everything that was there.

Hon. B. Ramsay: I have no idea for 2021.

Hon. H. Perry: Okay, thanks. I'll go back on the list.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: I just had a question on the basic income guarantee. I know we

talked about it, minister, in the House not that long ago. There were questions and you made a statement further to the letter, I think, that was received from your federal counterparts. Is there anything in the budget to further that initiative?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: We do have, again, our general consulting that we could use if needed, if we were to a point where we were able to put together a working group. It's necessary that we have a federal funding partner in that as well, so we're hoping that we hear something positive.

We also have our targeted basic income program, which is informative and will help us if we get to a basic income guarantee discussion. That's where you would see the funding in the budget related.

M. MacFarlane: You mentioned the working group. Does that working group come together once the federal partnership is achieved? Is that when that working group gets formed?

Hon. B. Ramsay: We just received our letter back recently from the government, saying they were interested in supplying data and basically administrative figures for us. But I think we would like to do a little bit of research from our own department or this government. I'm not exactly sure what that looks like. We can take that back if you'd like, but right now, I don't have information on what that looks like moving forward.

M. MacFarlane: Just to clarify, there is some discussion of doing some investigation or research? I guess I'm a little confused there. The budget allows that for that to happen, notwithstanding we're not seeing big movement from Ottawa?

Hon. B. Ramsay: I don't think we took that into consideration because we hadn't heard back from Ottawa when this budget was put in place, but we're certainly going to look into it. I can find out where it is right now, but I would have to take that back to you. I can get the information.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, if you would, minister. It's a pretty important topic, and topical.

Children rights impact analyses. Are we funding opportunities for staff internally to do those analyses or are those third-party completed?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Is this a question for the Child and Family Services section, I wonder, rather than Strategy, Policy and Seniors?

M. MacFarlane: Well, it could be. Again, I'll beg forgiveness on my newness. If it doesn't fit here, we'll –

Hon. B. Ramsay: That was me last year, so I get it.

M. MacFarlane: I'll carry it over to the better section.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: I believe the response that I'll need to provide is related to training, and the training budget for the social workers and these workers is in that later section, if that's okay.

M. MacFarlane: Okay, thank you for that. I'll try and remember to bring that out.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Thank you.

M. MacFarlane: The Seniors' Secretariat, is that under this section?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Yes, it is.

M. MacFarlane: Is there anything additional there by way of funds for them?

Hon. B. Ramsay: \$25,000.

[3:45 p.m.]

M. MacFarlane: \$25,000?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Yeah. It's a \$139,000 fund currently, so the \$25,000 increase. Also in the community grants for seniors, we have the Senior Citizens' Federation that we provide funding to, Age Friendly PEI, Chez Nous, and the Seniors College.

M. MacFarlane: Probably my last one for the section. Just looking at all those grants; how is it determined, who gets what? There's quite a list. I'm always curious about how that determination is made.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Which page of the handout are you on?

M. MacFarlane: Probably the wrong one.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: That's okay. No, I think you are on the right one. It just helps me with my response.

M. MacFarlane: It's SDS-3 and SDS-4.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: There is an application where the seniors groups apply for funding, indicating their budget and what they plan to do with the money, and it's considered internally and funded –

Hon. B. Ramsay: The Seniors' Secretariat makes the decision on those.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you.

Just some questions on the seniors' food program. Minister, last year you said you had a plan and then remember I said I was going to table my plan, you said you didn't want it because you had a plan for that \$250,000.

Where's the plan? We just talked about it here.

Hon. B. Ramsay: It's the communal grant that we just – the pilot program that we just distributed there. I think it ended March 22nd, the last day for applications.

G. McNeilly: But that's not a seniors pilot food program, that's a communal grant. Those are two totally separate things. Where is the plan for the \$250,000 food program that you said you had?

Hon. B. Ramsay: The communal food grant, and we gave each senior, I believe, who was on the SII program a \$50 supplement for groceries, and we invested some in Meals on Wheels to build a better relationship with them for our seniors.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: We spent close to \$300,000 on seniors' food this year; just over \$108,000 for the community fund, which will provide funding for communities to do community meals for seniors in

addition to providing the social aspect that a community meal will have. We paid \$50,000 to Meals on Wheels to help them expand their expansion.

Hon. B. Ramsay: Across the Island.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Yeah. Then we also provided \$50 per senior on the seniors independence program additional funding, which unfortunately is not a meal; however, it's still trying to get money into the hands of seniors to support them.

G. McNeilly: Those don't follow the model that you were setting up in the east that was marketed as a program. Sorry, I don't see them as being the same, especially the community fund – which are good, but those don't eliminate poverty in my mind. So, that's what I'm kind of getting at and that's why I've been so passionate about it. I wanted something more sustainable.

So, are we talking about – “Can't speak to a specific plan,” was what the table said here. The minister was quoted as saying you did have a plan last year and you were going to table that, because I have written questions in that I have still have not gotten responses to, minister.

Hon. B. Ramsay: From me?

G. McNeilly: Yeah, from you, the minister.

Hon. B. Ramsay: Oh, I respond to all. I can't imagine that you didn't get responses. If you want to –

G. McNeilly: So, you're saying that you responded?

Hon. B. Ramsay: I do believe – If you sent me questions, I'm sure I responded. If I didn't, you can certainly ask those questions again, and send them to me, and I'll get back to you.

G. McNeilly: They are over a year and a half old, and I brought them back to you last –

[3:50 p.m.]

Hon. B. Ramsay: Oh, so they weren't to me. I can table those today, I have those in my... yeah, I have those.

G. McNeilly: You have the answers?

Hon. B. Ramsay: I have the answers to those. They weren't to me, though; they were to a previous minister, but I do have them. I wasn't here a year and a half, member.

G. McNeilly: Well, a year ago. Sorry, time is just – I'm losing my hair trying to wait for the answer back to seniors' food program that was delayed a year, went out to 16 people, and we only spent \$40,000 out of \$250,000. So, that's where I'm getting at.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: We did spend close to \$300,000 this year.

G. McNeilly: That's good, and it remains, the fact that I just want to see the plan, that it's sustainable across the province. I know these are great gestures, and I completely love them. I think it's great, but I need to see a plan to make sure that it's targeted to the seniors which is – you know, 6,000... We've got different numbers too, on this side of the House.

I want to make sure that money is being targeted to the people who need it, and I haven't seen that.

Hon. B. Ramsay: I think maybe where you're a little maybe – I don't know if confused – or what twist you want to put on it, but it was a pilot program, and this is also a pilot program.

G. McNeilly: Why is it –

Hon. B. Ramsay: Because we are trying to figure out what is going to work best for seniors. So, we're calling them pilots because that's basically what they are.

G. McNeilly: That's not good enough because the pilot program – you evaluated the pilot program, I got the results, I got all the numbers, I read through the document, and didn't learn anything. It didn't go to enough seniors.

Hon. B. Ramsay: That's unfortunate.

G. McNeilly: Well, no, I mean, I can't... If I'm looking at the document – and I hope you can go back and look at it – it doesn't show me how we can extend this out. We

don't need another pilot program, seniors who are hungry need to be fed.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: So currently, our current plan at this time – and I am a finance person, but I sit around the table with the senior management team – we spent \$108,000 before March 31st, 2024 to do the community meals.

We spent \$50,000 before March 31st, 2024 to have Meals on Wheels reduce their wait list, take on more clients, provide precooked meals to seniors, increase the number and frequency of meals provided to existing client base, and increase the number of clients served, and followed up with the \$50 per seniors' independence client.

I assure you the team is working on developing a long-term plan that hopefully will require more funding than \$250,000. We definitely feel as passionately as you do about the importance. Unfortunately, the initial pilot was not a success, and we're working pretty hard to try to make the next number of years successful. We did spend almost \$300,000. So, well over the \$250,000.

G. McNeilly: Good answer, thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I have to go back to these numbers again. So, just for clarity, can you tell me what Stats Canada had said the amount of seniors living on Prince Edward Island below the poverty level is for this year?

Hon. B. Ramsay: So, what I have here – this is what I have, so that's what I can give you, member: 35,000 seniors, 65-plus, living on Prince Edward Island – which is 20 percent of our population – 5.7 percent of seniors are living in poverty, up to 5.1 percent, which equals to 1,864 people.

Hon. H. Perry: Okay, those are different numbers than what you gave me a while ago.

Hon. B. Ramsay: That's exactly what I gave you.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: So, 1,864 seniors living under the poverty line currently.

Hon. H. Perry: So, 1,864. Can you table that, please, from Stats Canada?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: We can do that.

Hon. B. Ramsay: Sure.

Hon. H. Perry: Please, thank you.

Hon. B. Ramsay: We can get you a takeback on that, yeah.

Hon. H. Perry: Okay.

Just a couple of small things here, but the two consulting contracts you have in there, what were they for?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Sorry, can you repeat that?

Hon. H. Perry: It was two consulting contracts within this section; what were they for?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: I'll need to bring that back.

Hon. H. Perry: Could you also bring back, if there was a report, what the outcome was and if there was an RFP process for either of those contracts?

[3:55 p.m.]

Hon. B. Ramsay: Yeah, we can take it back.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Sorry, you said the consultants as well as the...?

Hon. H. Perry: Yeah, there are two.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Two, yeah – as well as the results of what we received?

Hon. H. Perry: Yes. If there is a report, can you direct us to it?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Sure.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

The School Food Program is getting \$4.5 million this year. Is that up from last year?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: They're getting more than that. They are incredible partners. We have, for the food program, \$5,058,000 is what we have in funding. The \$1 million increase was entirely for the school food program.

K. Bernard: That is really great because I know this past year, they've had to do some fundraising efforts to be able to ensure the sustainability. So, does this funding ensure they're not going to have to do any fundraising?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: We've worked very closely with them this year, and they are incredible partners. They've been undergoing some pretty significant increases in the number of meals that need to be provided, and, obviously with inflation, the cost of the meals as well. So, we've been working very closely together.

We are currently working together with a consultant to look at the program and whether or not there are any changes we can make – cost control measures, ordering efficiency – to ensure the health and sustainability of the program long-term. So, we'll have a lot to figure out together over the next couple of months while this consultant work is happening.

Hon. B. Ramsay: And we look forward to the federal funding that's going to come through. We hope we'll hear, maybe tonight at supper time.

K. Bernard: I was going to jump back onto public education efforts for seniors issues. I'm wondering if there's anything budgeted, if there's any special projects happening in that area.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: We do have some core funding for printing of materials for seniors, and mailing.

K. Bernard: Would that be related to the food program, or are there other things that...?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: A lot of the initiatives that the seniors navigators work with clients with, I think, is where the core funding is, but it's available – like, one year you may need it for this project, so you're printing a number of pamphlets and mailing them out, and the next year will be another project. So, it could be used for seniors' food at some point, for sure.

K. Bernard: I know Meals on Wheels is really struggling right now to find volunteers, with drivers in particular. Have you worked with Meals on Wheels to find how you may better support them in other ways? Because I know that they're a big part of the seniors' food program, as I understand it. I'm a bit confused from that back and forth, but the way understand it is they're a big part of that.

So, are we sure that we're funding them appropriately so that they may be able to continue this work?

Hon. B. Ramsay: I know we've given them \$50,000 recently. We're continuing to work with them. We have a really good working relationship with them. We're always open to anything that they might need, anything that we can help them with type of thing.

K. Bernard: This section funds program evaluation? Is that...?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Yeah.

K. Bernard: Okay. I'm wondering what programs you're got prioritized this year for evaluation.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Can you rephrase? I'm trying to see the tie-in to budget. Could you just rephrase that a little bit?

K. Bernard: I'm wondering what program evaluations are being funded this year, so upcoming evaluations, if there's any.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: I'm sorry, I'd need to take that back. I'd need to consult with the program directors for that. Is that something I can take back?

K. Bernard: Sure.

I'm good. Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you, Chair.

Under grants, I'm very pleased to see that you have increased the food security grants, but can you tell us where this increase will primarily focus?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: The \$1 million is to the PEI School Food Program.

Hon. H. Perry: So, it's an increase to that program, and that's the only one?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Yes.

Hon. H. Perry: Okay.

[4:00 p.m.]

Just below that, senior supports. Can you outline what that refers to, seniors supports?

Trish Cameron-McDonald: Yeah, we did speak of this earlier, but it didn't take long, so I'm going to get right back to that section.

In the seniors supports, we have \$139,000 that we provide to the Seniors' Secretariat project fund, which applications are evaluated, and then a few other seniors NGOs that we provide annual funding to.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you. That refreshed my memory of that one.

Trish Cameron-McDonald: That's okay, yeah.

Hon. H. Perry: That's it for now.

Chair: Members, it's four o'clock, so we'll be reporting progress.

Hon. B. Ramsay: 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.

[S. MacEwen in the chair]

T. DesRoches: 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.

Deputy Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Motions Other Than Government

Orders Other Than Government

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member for O'Leary-Inverness, that the 26th order of the day be now read.

Deputy Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 26, *An Act to Amend the Farm Machinery Dealers and Vendors Act*, Bill No. 110, in Committee.

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

G. McNeilly: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member for O'Leary-Inverness, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Deputy Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Winsloe to chair Committee of the Whole House.

[Z. Bell in the chair]

Chair: The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Farm Machinery Dealers and Vendors Act*.

First of all, minister, before we get into debate of the bill, you had an opening remark or something you'd like to table.

R. Henderson: Yeah. Thanks, Chair.

Chair: Oh, sorry – member. [Laughter]

R. Henderson: Wishful thinking, there, Chair.

Chair: Throwback Thursday.

R. Henderson: Anyway, obviously this bill has been reviewed by a committee of this Legislature. This committee, represented by myself as the chair, has presented some recommendations to the Legislature, as you recall.

[4:05 p.m.]

Taking the input from the committee, I have this proposed number of amendments to make to the piece of legislation that is on the floor for debate.

If I have the floor, Chair, to start off.

Chair: While he's reading that in, can we get maybe the amendments being passed out, or how does that work?

One by one, okay.

R. Henderson: Yeah, we do one by one and then I think they pass them out, if that sounds correct.

I, the Member for O'Leary-Inverness, move Clause 1(c) of Bill No. 110 be amended by the deletion of the word "farmer" in the proposed clause 1(e.1) and the substitution of the words "bona fide farmer as defined in the *Real Property Assessment Act R.S.P.E.I.* 1988, Cap. R-4."

I think I go to the briefing note to explain that?

Chair: Sorry, member?

R. Henderson: I've made that motion to amend this piece of legislation. The briefing note, just to explain why that it is, is:

In our committee we did have some debate, I guess, on how you define a farmer. The premise of this legislation is really to help because we're such an important agricultural province, that farmers who are making a livelihood, this bill and legislation should help them.

So, this motion replaces the word "farmer" in the proposed clause of the *Farm Machinery Vendors and Dealers Act* with the words "bona fide farmer as defined in

the *Real Property Assessment Act* R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. R-4.”

There is a definition of who’s a farmer on Prince Edward Island. It’s through the Department of Finance, and they receive certain tax benefits because of that, and it’s based on a certain amount of income that they generate. So, we weren’t really trying to bring, say, hobby farmers into this particular piece of legislation. That’s motion 1.

Motion 2 –

Chair: Hon. member, actually, we typically would debate the first motion and then we would vote on that before you get into your second motion.

R. Henderson: Okay.

Chair: I’m just making sure that everybody has a copy of the motion to change a “farmer” to “bona fide farmer” in 1(c).

Are there any questions?

The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. B. Thompson: Thank you, member.

Can you define a bona fide farmer as a – just in your comments, you said don’t want hobby farmers. What’s the definition of a bona fide farmer?

R. Henderson: Well, I think it’s more for the Department of Finance but a bona fide farmer, I think, they have to receive \$20,000 worth of revenue from their farm. It has to be a certain percentage of their overall income. I believe that the Minister of Finance would have a more specific definition of that in the exact wording.

I think the reality is, once again, we’re trying to make sure that we’re allowing farmers who are really impacted by their livelihood, that this piece of legislation would provide them some assistance and assurance that they can get their machine repaired in a timely fashion. So, I don’t know how more specific you need to be to....

Hon. B. Thompson: No, that’s fine. It’s good to have a number.

R. Henderson: And I might add that that number can change. Legislation and the policy will determine bona fide farmers, but at least the legislation that defines a bona fide would be there to be a reference to.

Hon. B. Thompson: Yeah, it’s just more for the discussion here today to put a dollar figure on what a bona fide farmer is so that it’s in *Hansard*. That’s all I have.

Chair: Are there any more questions on the motion?

Shall it carry? Carried.

R. Henderson: Okay. Thanks, Chair.

Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

R. Henderson: The second amendment that I would like to make to the bill:

I, the Member for O’Leary-Inverness, move that Bill No. 110 be amended by the addition of the following after proposed section 11.2:

11.3 Obsolete farm machinery or parts

- (1) In this section "obsolete" means, in respect to farm machinery or a repair part, manufactured more than 25 years before the making of a request under subsection 11.1(1).

[4:10 p.m.]

Obsolete farm machinery or parts

- (2) The vendor is not liable under section 11.2 for more than the actual cash value of the obsolete farm machinery or a repair part at the time of request under subsection 11.1 (1), and the actual cash value shall be ascertained or estimated with proper deduction for depreciation, however caused, and shall not exceed the amount that it would cost to repair or replace the farm machinery, or any part thereof, with material of the like kind and quality; but if any part of the farm machinery is obsolete and out of stock, the liability of the vendor in respect thereof shall be limited to the value of the part at the time of request, not exceeding the maker’s latest price.

The briefing note on that is:

This motion adds another proposed section to Bill 110 dealing with obsolete machinery or repair parts that are old than 25 years since manufacture and set out a method for determining the actual cash value of the obsolete machinery or part, taking into account the depreciation and limiting a vendor's liability where the obsolete machinery is obsolete and out of stock.

The rationale behind that was in our committee, we did get into some question about how far back you go with this. If you're dealing with a 1940 International Harvester tractor, is that something, if the part can't be found, that the vendor should have a responsibility to find that part or provide that part? So, by defining it as something over the age of 25 years, at least the purchaser or the owner of that piece of equipment knows that there's not any potential protection.

As we see technology advance, we don't know how advanced this equipment is going to be in 25 years, so it at least provides some protection for the right to repair that particular machine if it's over that particular age. If there is a machine part that – the vendor isn't responsible to provide any support or replacements other than just the cash value of the part itself, and they don't necessarily have to have inventories for that.

Once again, we're not talking about they have to have every part of every machine in there, but they have to access to parts under the age of 25 years. That's kind of common anyway.

Chair: Okay. Thank you, hon. member.

I'll open it up to questions if there are any questions on the amendment.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. B. Thompson: What did the dealer – any dealership, did you discuss this amendment with?

R. Henderson: Yes. Well, I mean, I guess the reality is that during our committee hearings, we reached out to a number of organizations: the two larger farm dealers on

Prince Edward Island, Green Diamond and Kensington Agricultural Services.

We did get feedback from Green Diamond as well as the North American Equipment Dealers Association; we got feedback from them. I would say in both cases, they're not necessarily in support of it, but that would be the same in many of the other jurisdictions that probably have implemented this.

I mean, if you follow the right to repair, and as a farmer you'd know, this is a fairly big issue globally, but it's also – especially in North America – it's really a dispute between who owns a machine and who has the right to repair it. The arguments would be that the farm dealer, they want to retain those rights to do that. I would think most farmers, especially the Federation of Agriculture that made presentation to our bill, think the opposite.

So yes, we did reach out to them. Now, there's been a recent letter by the North American Equipment Dealers Association – I think it went to most MLAs – saying this has been rushed. Well, we've reached out to them – and they did make a written presentation. They decided to not come and present. Green Diamond would be similar; they did provide us a written presentation.

So, the committee would weigh that into their decision-making when they made the recommendations to the Legislature. This is a private member's bill, so I am just kind of copying what the committee had recommended in that.

Hon. B. Thompson: Reading the report – and I tuned into if not all of them, most of them – it's very one-sided. There's no alternative. It's almost like the chair is the one bringing this bill today. I'm not sure who writes this report, but was that conversation with Green Diamond – how come it's not in this report?

[4:15 p.m.]

R. Henderson: Once again, as a committee, all correspondences were communicated to all committee members. Once again, they were invited to present, okay? They chose to present in writing, which, I might add, that that has every bit of weight and significance

as a verbal presentation on the floor to the committee.

I would say that when we got together to write up our report – did I write the report? No; everybody participated there. There were members from all parties. We debated these issues. We went through the whole discussion around it.

It doesn't mean that everybody necessarily agrees with every wording of whatever, but in the end, that was the compromise of the recommendations, of which I am now taking those recommendations. We sent them to our legislative writer to put them into the legislative terminology that we have, and those are some of the amendments.

There were other recommendations, as you understand, minister. One was to have the Farm Practices Review Board have its mandate altered to be the adjudicator and reviewer of this particular legislation if there are any disputes that occur, as well as to the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning about trying to make sure that we're providing farm machinery mechanic programming so that we can keep the technologies here and know that we can repair those machines.

If you think that every piece of legislation and thought in a particular piece of legislation is going to have – it's going to have two sides to the story, two different viewpoints. In the end, the committee has to make a recommendation on what they decide. In our case, I would say that some of the discussion from the Federation of Agriculture, who represents many farmers, all the farm community – it seemed to be roundly endorsed, the concept, even before the amendments. We had farm machinery repair people in.

We certainly had a fair bit of feedback on the committee. We met numerous times. I don't know the exact number; I'd have to refer to the committee clerk to know those answers. And to say that this is sudden, well, this was tabled in the fall.

Hon. B. Thompson: I didn't use that word, "sudden."

R. Henderson: No, but anyway, it was tabled in the fall. It sat for some time, it was

referred to committee, we went through the committee review, it's now on the floor, and there's rationale why it's here today. It's a private member's bill from the opposition. This is our time, and if I'm to get this through second and third reading – I don't know when the Legislature may wrap up, but these are my two chances. So, that's why it's here at this particular time.

As far as feedback, I would argue that everybody had the ability to have the input and read through it. How much they did, that's up to each committee member.

Hon. B. Thompson: So, the 25 years – the dealer has to put a cash value on that part. That's a 25-year-old tractor. If they don't have the part, they have to give cash?

R. Henderson: As an example, if I have a machine that's 26 years old – go with that, let's make it simple here – and I say that I want to get this machine fixed, and I want the electronic codes to do that repair. It's 26 years old; it has now exceeded the ability of the legislation to apply to it. So really, the equipment dealer has some authority on that, that it's just going to say, "Okay, we can get the part," but there has to be somewhat of a statute of limitations.

I want to emphasize, "obsolete" is trying to define – it doesn't mean that the machine isn't operational, or it can't be used, or can't be repaired. It's just their ability to come back to the legislation has been – basically, it's past that statute of limitations, I guess you could....

Hon. B. Thompson: Was that just an example you used, electronics, or is that...? I read it as any part.

R. Henderson: It would be any part, but I think why this legislation is now becoming now more front and centre in the agricultural community is that the technology is advancing at a pretty rapid rate.

[4:20 p.m.]

We're now into the electronics of electronic codes and artificial intelligence and things of that nature, and these things can be somewhat challenging for farmers to figure out. These dealers, they have a lot of power and authority over these things. Like I say, a

dealer can shut a tractor down at any given time, really; they have that technology.

So, the reality is that farmers need some sense of ability to get their part, or get their information so that they can go and repair this or hire a mobile repair business – there are a number of them out there; we had one of them make a presentation – to come in, and the dealer provide them the information, and they can do the repair, versus the scenario where the dealer says, “No, I’m not giving you this information. We’re the only ones that are going to repair it and we’re going to show up in two weeks’ time because we’re backlogged.”

That’s kind of the reality of where we’re trying to address this issue and provide farmers with that ability. Now, once again, if a machine is leased that’s a little different dynamic; if the machine a loaner that’s a little different dynamic. This is for stuff that – if you own the machine.

I might emphasize that what we’re doing here is we’re developing legislation. If this is fortunate enough to pass and get through third reading it’s going to then go back to you, minister, and your department, to develop any particular regulations to deal with the issue around the Farm Practices Review Board.

So, there is some work that is going to be required here before this law eventually becomes proclaimed and enacted. I think there are 14 US states that are going through a similar process, of which I think four have actually proclaimed and enacted it; the rest are going through the same process as we are here.

Hon. B. Thompson: Good conversation here, and I wholeheartedly support this idea of this bill. As a farmer myself, I know there are the struggles with the costs of everything.

But I do appreciate the relationship that I do have with my dealer, and that the 1,200 bona fide farmers on Prince Edward Island have with their dealership. Not everyone has the same circumstances. I do think this is a valuable bill that – it does need more time, because as you said, we can pass it here today and then my department has to go back and do this, this, and this to make it...

So, I’m proposing... Because there’s a balance here. There’s a balance here, because I do not want a small province of 1,200 farmers to be affected by... When all the Maritime John Deeres are owned by one company, and if – 1,200 farmers on Prince Edward Island and only a fraction of them would be clients of John Deere, maybe 600 at the best.

Is there an opportunity – and I did hear this in a presentation with one of your presenters. I think it was the MP from Quebec. He did offer up that admission that a dealership could just set up shop on the other side of the bridge and say, “We can’t make any money there.”

So, my offer is: can we take this, wait until the fall, we’ll work on it this summer – it’s still your bill. We’ll work on it this summer. We have to get these amendments – there’s going to be a lot of work on this. There’s a lot of work to do on this.

You didn’t even address my letter in your report. You didn’t mention this letter that we all received last night, where the North American Equipment Dealers Association highlighted: “We maintain this bill is not needed in the first place, as there is an industry commitment that makes the repair tools available to customers if they want them. Any argument that a farmer makes that they can’t buy a tool to repair their own equipment is disingenuous.” And it goes on and on and on.

[4:25 p.m.]

I know that’s the opposite side, but we need to have a balanced report and this report is not balanced. That’s what I have an issue with. I want to support the farmers, but I want to do it with a balance, so we don’t inversely affect our dealerships across this Island, because they’re part of our economy too. It’s part of our industry to have a dealership that is in your backyard and not in Moncton, so....

Chair: I don’t know if there’s a question there, but hon. member.

R. Henderson: Well, I’ll respond to that. I’ll go on a couple of avenues on this. The first issue is that this legislation is comparable to legislation in Colorado, West

Virginia, Vermont, and Minnesota. Do you think there's no farm dealers in those states? No.

Once again, we're down to really two farm dealers on Prince Edward Island to begin with. So, who knows where farm dealers are going to set up over time? We have no authority to tell them where they set up and do their practice.

But when it comes to what we're proposing in this particular legislation – and the farm dealers, I'll say I have no dispute with the farm dealers that I see on Prince Edward Island here at all either, but this is why legislation should be in place. Should a problem or dispute occur, that's why, at least, now we've established the goalposts.

It is your responsibility to come up with the regulations – I can't do that; I'm not the minister – and I'll say we've had a fair bit of time to try to do that. It doesn't mean that legislation can't be amended in the future. There are all kinds of things.

If this legislation is passed, and it goes back to your department, and you're working on the regulations and you see that there's an issue that is a problem for you, bring it back to the Legislature and we'll amend it. If it's good legislation, I'm sure it has its merits to passing. But I think there's an importance of at least establishing the goalposts here to set the rules in place for how farm dealers present themselves. Like I say, they can work with it.

And I would emphasize that to the North American Equipment Dealers Association. No, there isn't an issue. If there's never going to be an issue, there's no problem here. You have nothing to fear or to be fearful of. It's only when a farm machine is – you're unable to get the information for the individual who has paid and purchased and used it in their operation, that if they find that there is something that they cannot access to repair, they have at least some authority and some legislative backing to take their dispute with the dealer somewhere.

They're going to take it to the Department of Agriculture, this particular act, and they're going to ask for the Farm Practices Review Board – that's our recommendation; that's

not in the legislation, I agree with that, but you've got to make that change – and the Farm Practices Review Board will hear both sides of the equation, and they'll make a decision. At least that particular farmer has some authority to have some way to try to get some retribution back on that particular piece of machinery.

That's the whole nuts and bolts of what we're trying to talk about here. Like I say, I know the argument is that we didn't consult enough; we did. We wrote letters to people. We asked them about it. The North American Equipment Dealers Association had every liberty to come and make a presentation. And your letter, we took that letter. Everybody had it in the committee. So, we heard that view.

Hon. B. Thompson: You ignored it.

R. Henderson: But my point is: everybody who has an opinion, we hear it, but we're not going to agree with every opinion. Because you've got a contrary point of view here in a piece of legislation, you're not going to satisfy everybody.

I would argue that this legislation established the goalposts and determines the rules of engagement for farm dealers in Prince Edward Island in respect to repairing machinery. It allows the farmer to have some place that he or she can get some retribution on a machine that they can't get fixed in a timely fashion. And like I said, I think the arguments – this is not new. Colorado, West Virginia, Vermont, and Minnesota all have this legislation, or comparable.

Hon. B. Thompson: Those are US states.

R. Henderson: I know they're US states.

The John Deere machine is made in the United States; it's made in Germany. I mean, or every other company – if we're talking cell phones or whatever, it's not all made here but it's purchased here, and it's used by farmers who are from our province.

[4:30 p.m.]

PEI is an incredibly important agricultural department, as well as an industry here to Prince Edward Island. Providing them some

protection in the equipment that they're using and purchasing provides them at least a little sense that when they're making these expensive purchases and using that equipment in 15, 20 years' time, and something goes wrong, they now can go back, get a copy of the manual, get some particular information on maybe a code that has to be inputted in, and make the repair. They get some local repair business to come and do that for them. They do not have to go back to the dealer.

That's why 14 other states besides the ones I mentioned are in the same situation. Farmers are trying to stand up for themselves because technology has advanced to a far greater degree than what it was even five years ago or 10 years ago. That's the premise behind this, and that's why this legislation is being debated.

There have been other provinces that have also gone through this. Now, they haven't got it to the stage of being passed, but I would argue agriculture is probably the most important industry on Prince Edward Island – as you would probably agree, minister – and if we cannot protect the most important industry to Prince Edward Island, to the taxpayers of this province, and provide a little bit of legislation –

[Interjections]

R. Henderson: What? That's what it is. It's ultimately whether – do you want to protect the farmers or do you want to protect the farm dealers?

At the end of the day, I'm just saying; we've heard from farmers, we've heard from industry representatives, we heard from everybody, and they've come forward with their recommendations. We heard the other recommendations. Our committee made recommendations to this Legislature.

I would also this to the committee that I chaired. These are the things that we came up with. We're making the recommendations to the Legislature. Otherwise, what was the point of us and what we did?

Hon. B. Thompson: So, there was a lot to unpack there. A lot.

So, admittedly – it's on *Hansard* – you said your bill is flawed, that my department will have to go back and fix it. So why, would we pass a flawed bill just to have to fix it?

R. Henderson: My first comment on that is that you have to provide the regulations. I cannot put the regulations in here.

Hon. B. Thompson: You said it was flawed.

R. Henderson: Well, if there are flaws – if you think there's a flaw, make an amendment. You can sit here and make any amendment; if you think there's a piece of wording that you want – this Legislature debates it.

But at the end of the day, I cannot do the regulations. All this Legislature can do is it can pass a piece of legislation, which we as a committee made recommendations. We asked our legislative counsel to write up the wording to make this based on what our recommendations were to it, and this is what has come back.

At the end of the day, you have to figure out the little nuances of a particular bill to clarify legislation, and like I say, if there's a third party like the Farm Practices Review Board, you have to change their mandate. That has to happen, and you have the authority to do that. It's up to you to decide whether you do it and when you proclaim it. I can't dictate that.

We've seen bills sit for two years here and not be proclaimed because they're – and the argument that government will take back is, "We're still working on it, trying to get it figured it out." That's no different than this particular bill too. But I would hope you'd do it sooner and I would hope you would show some utmost importance of this to help the farm community, should it ever be required.

But at least you have the ability to do that. On any given Tuesday, you can change the regulations or make the regulations. We only can do legislation in the time this House sits, and I can only do it on the time that's allocated to the opposition party; I mean, unless there's some negotiations to allow me to sit here. But in general terms, that's the process that I have to go through,

and I respect that process. I'm happy debating. We're having a pretty good debate; I hope I'm holding my own here.

[Interjections]

Hon. B. Thompson: You've got a cheerleading squad over here.

R. Henderson: But to say the bill is flawed – I don't want to say it's flawed, but that's the best wording that I can come up with based on the recommendations that our legislative counsel has put in place. If you think there's better, I'm happy to hear those. But at the end of the day, you're going to have to do the regulations if it passes, and like I say, if there's something that goes through the process you go through and you want to amend this legislation in the future, you can do that.

The Farm Machinery Dealers and Vendors Act, this is an amendment to it. There have been amendments to different legislation over periods of time, so there's nothing new in anything we're doing here. I always use this argument, if you want to have perfection be the enemy of the good, that's a pretty high standard in all pieces of legislation.

[4:35 p.m.]

That's what my theory is behind what we're trying to accomplish here, the best I could come up with.

Chair: The hon. Economic Development, Innovation and Trade.

Hon. G. Arsenault: I'm just looking to see – I didn't hear the answer to the 25-year cash value. I'm just wondering, in other jurisdictions like the United States, like you mentioned, is that up to 25 years or how is that comparable?

R. Henderson: I would argue that the concept of the term of "obsolete" was to try to set some parameters around the machine, at what point in time that – we're not asking farm dealers to support these things for an eternity, so we put the number 25 years in, and that was more from a recommendation of people who made input into our committee. We threw numbers – you could make it 30 years; you could make it 10. That, once again, would go back to – that

would require that amendment to the legislation.

I would argue that 25 is a pretty reasonable number of a machine, because usually, that's probably into its maybe second or third-hand ownership. When somebody purchases a machine brand new, it probably has warranties and things of that nature, or even if it's leased. But eventually that machine goes from the new owner – which is maybe able to afford things and has a bigger volume of work that it would provide, but eventually it goes to a second-hand user and a third-hand user.

At some point in time the machine becomes a bit dated, and we're not asking farm dealers to provide more than 25 years. That's a number that could be done by anybody. Any member of the Legislature could put an amendment into it here, now, or do it in the future. But I would argue that 25 seems pretty reasonable.

[T. DesRoches in the chair]

Hon. G. Arsenault: How would that compare, again, to the US market? Is there anything there in numbers? Because we're seeing 25 that we've looked at here, but what would they have in the states that you've mentioned previously?

R. Henderson: I can't say that I'd know that answer specifically. Like I said, we try to determine "obsolete" just because it was brought up in our committee, and we did think that that makes some sense, because I think one of the members had mentioned, "Well, what about that 1925 international harvester, old tractor? Should they have to be responsible for that?"

Common sense would prevail that no, that's probably not a machine that's going to be that essential to a farm operation. So, I would argue that that 25-year term is just something that we are specifically identifying to try to take the ambiguity out of that particular machine, and gives it at least a finite date.

Hon. G. Arsenault: Last one, and it may be more of a comment than a question. I'm looking through the economic development lens in my portfolio, knowing that you've mentioned here, in terms of farmers wanting

to – for the greater good of farmers. At the same time, what would we respond, in terms of larger companies or vendors maybe considering moving out of our jurisdiction to avoid these limitations?

Would that be a consideration or something of that level that would be alarming for business ventures here on PEI?

R. Henderson: I mean, like I said before, I can't tell a business what terms they want to operate under. We do develop legislation here, but that's like any other – Better Business Bureau, ethics, or any other legislation; minimum wage that we state, or any other piece of legislation that's out there. There are going to be different parameters that we're going to put in it in Prince Edward Island than they are in other provinces, but they all try to balance out over a period of time.

I would be quite surprised if a dealer pulled out because of this, because like I said before, the dealers are saying themselves, "We're doing this." So, what's the big issue? The issue is only when they decide they aren't doing it, and now we have legislation to say that you should do it, and we have a mechanism to finalize through that the Farm Practices Review Board is going to be the adjudicator to say whether that dealer was treating the farmer fairly or not. Like I said, we can get into crazy scenarios that – who knows?

But keep in mind, the amount of farm dealers that are left in Prince Edward Island is far less than what it ever was. Really, we've got two significant ones, of which one has a number of different outlets in the province; but it's still owned by the one, and they own pretty well all of Atlantic Canada.

[4:40 p.m.]

If you go do any searching on farm machinery, John Deere is not necessarily in favour of this type of legislation. But there are 14 states going through it and four have already implemented it. I wasn't expecting that they would be in support. Why have a rule when they say they don't need it?

Hon. G. Arsenault: Last question, I guess. In terms of other provinces or territories we have in the country, do you know of any that

would have kind of the similar regulation that we're talking about here and that's implemented, not just looking at?

R. Henderson: No, there are none that are implemented that we are aware of. There certainly are – I think British Columbia and Ontario, and I think Quebec, are all kind of in the process in some capacity. We did have actually the MP who had tabled it in Ontario – he's now an MP, MP Michael Coteau – and he was very encouraging.

His bill, to be fair, was more than just farm machinery, too. It was more the right to repair, just in general. Some of this was coming from cell phones and things like that. Do you have the right to repair that?

So, no; no other province, but I'd also argue that there would be no other province that agriculture would be as big an industry, as important to our economy, as in Prince Edward Island. So, we probably should be leaders in this.

If I look at the states that have been debating it in the United States, there are 18 that are in some form of the process, and four that have completed it and have enacted the legislation. But I would say, in general, to compare Prince Edward Island to, say, Vermont – well, Vermont is not a very big state, but it has that legislation. And it has a smaller farm community.

I would also emphasize that I feel this bill is really more important to smaller farmers than it is larger ones, because larger farmers tend to have newer equipment. It's really when that machine gets a bit older, and the warranty has expired, or it's not leased anymore. That's the farmer who's going to have the bigger difficulty in going back to the dealer and getting the information.

I know in my own case – I guess I'm not a bona fide farmer anymore, but – when I had to get a little bit of work done on my tractor, it was complicated and costly. That wasn't why this legislation was ever created, but it made me understand why this is needed in that regard because if that dealer did not give me the information, I've got a tractor that's sitting there and I can't do a thing with it. I can't move it.

That's why I'd be arguing that they should be able to provide me a little bit of information that I can give to the person who repairs my machine to do that little code adjustment and get the machine going again.

Like I said, I'm not a bona fide farmer anymore, but if I had a large field of hay or potatoes that needed be harvested and I'm stuck, my livelihood is gone. It's totally in the palm of the hands of that dealer. I know they'd do what they could to help me out, but what if they didn't? Or what if they charged me – “We'll give you that code, but it's an exorbitant amount of money,” Is it even worth my machine?

So, I would like to know that I could take this to a committee like the Farm Practice Reviews Board – which does a similar type of work, only not maybe so much on a machine – and that I could have my two cents' worth to say this is why they should give me this information, and hopefully they would have the authority to dictate that to the manufacturer or the vendor to do that.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. E. Hudson: Thank you, Chair.

Just more comments, to be honest, Chair; probably a couple of questions.

Certainly, I do want to thank the committee and the member for bringing this forward. I would dare say that a lot of thought, a lot of discussion/debate has gone into this. I think that for the most part, too, we can all agree that agriculture is paramount with regard to the economy of PEI, right from tip to tip.

Also, the hon. member indicated or questioned if he's holding his own in debate. I don't know if I've ever seen a time that he hasn't been able to hold his own in debate.

With that, though, I started farming –

[Interjections]

Hon. E. Hudson: I started farming after university back in 1980, and maybe I've just been extremely fortunate – and no longer farming on any size scale right now.

[4:45 p.m.]

But even at that point in time – and the hon. member has referenced that it may be more beneficial to smaller-scale farms. At no point when I was farming did I ever consider myself to be a large-scale farmer. Average, probably, back in the 1980s; as time went on, yes, smaller scale, without a doubt.

But maybe I was just fortunate with the equipment dealer that I had. I have never had an issue with repairs. Yes, they're expensive, but everything's expensive when it comes to any type of business. But I never had an issue with regard to timely repairs. Certainly, I've had mechanics at the farm a number of years ago at 10, 10:30 at night working on equipment for me. So, I have to give a shout-out to the dealerships that I really feel have done and continue to do a great job.

Now, I guess my question to the hon. member – and it's a follow-up to the offer that the Minister of Agriculture put out – taking my personal experience – and it's only my personal experience – as to never having had any major delays, down times, and the like that resulted from what, as I understand it, this bill is potentially – maybe trying to fix isn't the right word, but trying to alleviate, anyway.

I haven't heard the hon. member respond to the Minister of Agriculture's offer or suggestion. I think it warrants it. I don't see – personally, again – the tremendous necessity of having to get this through today, when we can collaboratively – and we've heard that word before, and I think it's a great word in the Legislature – work going forward over the next few months to make sure that we do get this right.

R. Henderson: Well, as I said in my preamble when I tabled the committee's report, the farm dealers have been very good. I'm not disputing anything that you're saying in that regard.

I would just argue, the committee did – we did a fair bit of work on this. We had numerous meetings, we met as a group, and we came up with recommendations. Out of those recommendations, we came up with some amendments and two recommendations.

I just fail to see what more there is to be done at this stage, other than saying that the minister has to work on regulations; that's a given. They could have been working on that since back – in the anticipation of this, but let's be fair to the minister and his department; they didn't know whether I was going to bring it back. Who knows what the scenario would have been?

So, from my perspective, we're still debating this one amendment, but I would like to at least get that amendment done, and then let's vote on the bill. I guess if it doesn't pass, the minister still has every authority to continue on to do whatever, whether he wants to bring it back or whether I have another run at it, but I would argue that I don't see the premise behind why this wouldn't. What's so difficult in this minor – really, I would say – amendment to a piece of legislation that allows farmers a right to repair their machines?

The precedent of places like Vermont, Minnesota, West Virginia, and Colorado – if I used Vermont, it wouldn't be much different than Prince Edward Island. We would probably have a more important agricultural industry to us than Vermont would, as an example. So, I just think it's an important piece of legislation.

The work is done. Let's move on. Let's do governance here. Let's get this act passed in this Legislature, and then allow the minister to do his work. If he finds by fall that there's a piece of something that needs to be amended or changed or added, he brings it back in the fall and it's done.

Hon. B. Thompson: I'll bring my own bill.

R. Henderson: Well, sure, yeah. You have every liberty to do that, minister. But I just don't see what would be different, why we can't do that.

Hon. B. Thompson: There was a lot said there. I appreciate the passion of the member but if he wants to see it get to a vote, I'd be happy to bring my own legislation this fall.

R. Henderson: So, Chair, can we vote on at least this amendment or bring that to an end?

Chair: I have another speaker.

[4:50 p.m.]

The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

H. MacLennan: Thanks, Chair.

I sat on the committee and I fully understand what you're bringing forward. I support that part of it. The only thing in committee I did ask a couple of times, and I could never seem to get an answer, is what are the legal ramifications of copyright on dealers or the ownership of something, especially if something goes wrong, like if you do your own...?

R. Henderson: I guess my answer to that was we had our legislative counsel on speed dial if we wanted to bring them over, but nobody made any motion or movement to bring that forward. That's –

An Hon. Member: In camera.

R. Henderson: Yeah, I know it's in camera. We asked them to come over. Well, yeah, the Leader of the Opposition was there. But that would be an argument on any piece of legislation. What are the ramifications of it? We determine the laws in this province. We determine the rules of engagement. The minister will focus on the regulations and potential fines or something that might be involved with that, but like I said, we didn't ask him to come over. He was there. I made the arrangements to have him at our beck and call if we wanted. I think other members were there.

H. MacLennan: Yeah, I know. I took it as on the wording of how to do it, but I mean, on the legal implications if a farmer does his own thing on the computer and something goes wrong, what are the legal ramifications of that? Not the wording of the bill; it's if something goes wrong.

R. Henderson: That's like any other – if there's a challenge, there's some place you can take it to court and there's an argument on both sides and somebody makes a decision. I mean, that's on everything; it's like that, if something goes wrong. It's no different than this legislation. If something goes wrong, it's got to go to the legislative committee or the Farm Practices Review Board, or if somebody loses a case, it will

come back to the Legislature for amendments so that they don't lose it in the future.

From a legislative perspective, the legislation gives you – I call it the goal posts. It gives you a sense of what we're trying to determine on basically the right to repair farm machinery; who has that authority?

Like I say, there will always be a dispute and that's why we have the mechanism of Farm Practices Review Board to try to adjudicate over that and it's up to the minister to give the authority to that committee to adjudicate and enforce. We can't do that in legislation. If I could have put the Farm Practices Review Board into this legislation, I'd have been happy to do it, but our legal counsel – who the clerk and I consulted with to say that these are some of the things that I committee recommended; "How do you word it?" – that's what they came back with.

H. MacLennan: Yeah, and I understand that, the wording of it, but I'm just trying to get – as our mechanic came in that day and told us the dealers own the software, no matter how old it is, how long you have the tractor. That's what I mean by legal....

R. Henderson: There's the debate in everything we're saying in here, but ultimately, that would be determined by the Farm Practices Review Board. This is why that legislation was put in place in four states, and 14 others going through; that's the whole debate. Did you buy the machine, or did you not buy the machine? Or did you just buy a part of machine and the software isn't part of the machine? That's the whole debate of why we're sitting here.

I'm arguing that the farmer needs to know that answer, and this is where the farmer can find out what they own and do not own and what can be repaired and what can't be repaired. I would emphasize and I would hope that the minister – this is not about trying to modify a machine, nor is it to try and circumvent any environmental regulations. It's to try to say: How do you repair that machine to make it start and stop and do the things that it's designed to do?

Chair: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. B. Thompson: Thank you.

Just to go back to your report – and I did watch Andrew Kelly and he was very good.

R. Henderson: He was, yeah.

Hon. B. Thompson: But he was very honest, too.

R. Henderson: Yeah.

Hon. B. Thompson: He said he can get all the information if he buys it, but he needed a business plan to do it and he was happy where he was at. So, how did that turn into this conversation?

[4:55 p.m.]

R. Henderson: Well, once again, you're right. Andrew Kelly is a mobile farm machinery repair operator. He's an independent. He can get it, but we're not disputing that you can – farm machinery dealers have been good. They've been providing this information. But what happens when they don't? That's the part that's the problem. You're putting all the authority into an organization that's regulating itself. It is not regulating on behalf of the farmers.

That's why I'm trying to put legislation in place that gives the farmer at least some sense of influence in this dispute, if there ever is one that comes up. I would hope that this legislation never gets used. It would be an ideal situation, and I think you as the minister would say the same. But it's our role of legislators here to try to foresee what the future problems are going to be, and I can see as we move down the road with artificial intelligence; the electronics are getting so advanced and these machines eventually will become old. Farmers may have challenges in getting that stuff repaired.

This will allow the farmer to access the information to give to his repairer who is an independent person and get them to fix it. That's the whole premise of what we're doing.

Hon. B. Thompson: So, we're doing a bill that you hope we never have to use, and you don't really know what –

R. Henderson: That's every piece of legislation, almost.

Hon. B. Thompson: You're not providing the problems that we're trying to fix. You're trying to solve a problem that you don't know exists yet.

R. Henderson: Chair, I'll emphasize: you hope it doesn't happen, but this is the whole premise of legislation. What happens if somebody doesn't do what they're supposed to do? You need to have some leverage on behalf of the farmer, and it's our role as the Legislature to allow that farmer to have the tools to do a repair.

Like I say, you hope you never have to do it, but I would think every piece of legislation that tells somebody what they have to do.... Whether it's minimum wage, or whether it's the building permits for housing, it's there because if people aren't complying, you're making sure that they follow what we think is appropriate in this province.

At the end of the day, we want to be preemptive here. We want to be ahead of the curve and provide – that's what good legislation is. If the problem exists down the road, and all of a sudden now there's no legislation and there's some farmer that can't get their information to repair the machine, then all of a sudden, we didn't do our job.

That's why I would argue that now is the time to get the legislation. Get it set in place and get the regulations, and hopefully within a year you'd have this proclaimed and maybe there'll be a problem that it can solve at that point in time. Every day we delay, it's just another day that farmers don't have that ability.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

Just quickly on this, I appreciate the member's bill. It's a direction that we're moving in globally with respect to vehicles; passenger vehicles. It's an issue with Tesla. It's an issue with repairing complicated electric vehicles and technology on internal combustion engine vehicles. It's going to come. I think it's definitely happening.

As the member has indicated, it's already in several states in the United States. So, I guess it's time we're going to get on board at some point. We have to get on board with this and this legislation puts us in a step in that direction.

The concern raised by the Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke with respect to the legality of it, I think we could look to the United States to see how they've couched their contractual arrangements between the dealers and the farmers to see just how they've dealt with the liability aspect of it. We're not creating a new wheel here. The wheel has largely been created, and we look to precedent to see how we fill our void in this particular province.

You could easily contract that liability away through the purchase agreement in the contracts (Indistinct) acquiring the particular properties. So, again, perfection is often the enemy of the good; I use that expression a lot, myself. I think there is value in moving to secure rights on the ground for people to repair their own equipment.

Just a statement.

Chair: Okay, I've got no one else on to talk.

Shall the amendment to Bill 110 carry?

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Some Hon. Members: Nay!

Chair: I have some carries and some nays.

By a show of hands, all in favour of the carry?

[5:00 p.m.]

And the nays?

The bill did not carry. The amendment.

R. Henderson: The amendment didn't carry.

Chair: The amendment did not carry.

R. Henderson: Making it in perpetuity is fine by me.

Chair: Okay, so we're back on Bill No. 110. Is there any more discussion on the bill? No?

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West
Royalty.

G. McNeilly: The amendment doesn't carry. What is your –

R. Henderson: Now the bill would go forward with amendment 1, which defines farming. It doesn't have the "obsolete," which like I said, at the end of the day, it's kind of a number. Now, it's up to the minister, and the regulations would maybe determine that a bit more specifically should they want to, or they leave it open-ended, and that becomes a legal debate on a machine that's 50 years old versus 20 years old. I don't have a problem with it at all, with the "obsolete" part. It was meant to be more clarity, and it was also recommended by the committee.

G. McNeilly: Like I said, one of the amendments that was just voted on, that was recommended by the committee.

R. Henderson: Yeah.

G. McNeilly: It seems like that's a direct.... You guys put a lot of time into that committee; I sat into a couple meetings. I guess it's kind of a weird situation for it to be voted against. Now we've got another amendment coming up –

R. Henderson: No, that's it.

G. McNeilly: I guess we're just voting back on the piece of legislation as it stands.

R. Henderson: With one amendment.

G. McNeilly: With one amendment.

R. Henderson: Yeah, which defined farming. I guess the reality is the legislative committee did its work, it made its findings, it made its presentation. It is a recommendation to all the Legislature; it is not any – if somebody voted one way or another, that's irrelevant. At this point in time, you're all members of the Legislature, and you look at it as what you feel is important, whether you feel that farmers should have these legislative capabilities or

they don't. It kind of really boils down to that.

But as the presenter of the bill, I don't necessarily see it as a problem that the obsolescence date isn't passed. Like I say, the legislation is still the same. It was the same before we even did any amendments, but it seems like we want to leave that more open-ended. I would argue to be more precise would have been better, but those are the wishes of the Legislature.

G. McNeilly: So, the committee did a great job of that. There were some questions before about the committee. Was that process of deliberation in getting to this point a fair and just process, in your eyes?

R. Henderson: Well, I would argue that it was, but like I said, we were getting differing points of view. I think you get that in any piece of – it's all unanimous, there's no debate, why would you even send something to committee? The whole idea of sending it to committee was – we had members from all parties; we put out lots of invitations of people to come. Every committee member gave suggestions, and our clerk did a lot of hard work to try to contact some of these people. Some were more than willing to present. Some were more than willing to just write a letter to our committee. Some had no feedback whatsoever. Where do you go in the end, if somebody says they don't want to participate in a process?

We still have authority as a Legislature to try to come up with something as a committee, and I would argue that we did our best. When we asked about bringing this to a committee report, people showed up at the meetings as best they could, and we had recommendations.

In the end, I don't know more of what you do. Yes, there's maybe somebody else who will want to report somebody else over here, but this can go on for perpetuity. You'd get nowhere. If you're trying to get legislation passed, you've got to make decisions at some point in time.

G. McNeilly: I'm good for right now.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. B. Thompson: Just on that, and I'm not going to dwell on it. My recommendations weren't in the report. You're saying that I have to fix your flawed legislation –

R. Henderson: I didn't say it was flawed.

Hon. B. Thompson: – and you didn't take any of my recommendations. Chair, can I table this in case...? Because the committee obviously didn't feel value in my recommendations.

[5:05 p.m.]

R. Henderson: I will respond to that by saying your committee was asked to present. Your committee was asked to present in front of us. It declined. It wouldn't do it. It sent us a letter instead. If you're saying you're genuine in trying to make this legislation right, why weren't you here? Why didn't you come and present?

Hon. B. Thompson: I will make sure I will next time.

R. Henderson: You did the cowardly approach and wrote a letter. That's what you did.

Hon. B. Thompson: [Laughter] Cowardly.

R. Henderson: That's what you did.

Chair: No one else?

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

An Hon. Member: Extend the hour.

R. Henderson: We get tomorrow. I got a little carried away; I apologize.

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.

[S. MacEwen in the chair]

T. DesRoches: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Farm Machinery Dealers and Vendors Act*, I beg leave to report that

the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Deputy Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. members, the hour has been called. I'll call on the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Winsloe.

Z. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere, that this House adjourn until Wednesday, April 17th, at 1:00 p.m.

Deputy Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Have a good evening, everybody.

[The Legislature adjourned until Wednesday, April 17th, at 1:00 p.m.]