



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of Prince Edward Island**

**Official Report of
Debates and Proceedings**

(Hansard)

Third Session of the 67th General Assembly

Tuesday, 21 April 2026

No. 14

The Honourable Brad Trivers, Speaker

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

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

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Bell , Hon. Zack (PC)	Charlottetown-Winsloe (10)	Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning Minister responsible for Acadian and Francophone Affairs
Bernard , Karla (G)	Charlottetown-Victoria Park (12)	Third Party Whip
Bevan-Baker , Peter (G)	New Haven-Rocky Point (17)	Third Party House Leader
Burridge , Hon. Jill (PC)	Stratford-Keppoch (6)	Minister of Finance and Affordability
Compton , Hon. Darlene (PC)	Belfast-Murray River (4)	Minister of Land and Environment
Croucher , Hon. Robin (PC)	Souris-Elmira (1)	Minister of Education and Early Years
Curran , Brendan (PC)	Georgetown-Pownal (2)	
Deagle , Hon. Cory (PC)	Montague-Kilmuir (3)	Minister of Health and Wellness
DesRoches , Tyler (PC)	Summerside-Wilmot (21)	Government Whip
Dillon , Susie (PC)	Charlottetown-Belvedere (11)	Deputy Speaker
Dollar , Hon. Kent (PC)	Brackley-Hunter River (15)	Minister of Housing and Communities
Henderson , Robert (L)	O’Leary-Inverness (25)	Opposition Whip
Hudson , Hon. Ernie (PC)	Alberton-Bloomfield (26)	Minister of Fisheries, Rural Development and Tourism
Lantz , Hon. Rob (PC)	Charlottetown-Brighton (13)	Premier Minister responsible for Indigenous Affairs Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs

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

[The Legislature met at 1:03 p.m.]

[Hon. B. Trivers in the chair]

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of Guests

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

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

It's a great Tuesday to be back in the Legislature. I'd like to welcome everyone into the gallery here. I see Mike Redmond and his son; I believe his name is James. I saw him at the 4-H public speaking event. He did a tremendous job. He cheers for a hockey team that I might not cheer for, but they're doing pretty good in the playoffs. I want to welcome everyone here.

Last week, I mentioned that this week is National Volunteer Week. So many coaches and community people and firefighters – there are so many volunteers that make up the fabric of our Island and the culture that we have here in Prince Edward Island, so I want to wish everyone a happy Volunteer Week. Keep on volunteering out there. It makes all our communities better.

[1:05 p.m.]

Also, spring is here. I saw that when I was leaving to come here this morning, my wife's farm hands were hooking on the manure spreader. It's that time of year. I remember seven years ago, after the election, I got a call from Premier King at the time when we were getting appointed to Cabinet. My phone rang, and he said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm spreading manure." He said, "Well, you're going to get to spread a whole lot more because you're my Minister of Agriculture."

[Laughter]

Hon. B. Thompson: I want to wish all the farmers a safe – I'll just remind people that there's going to be tractors on the road going forward, and it just takes a little extra time and a little extra space. I want to wish all the farmers a great growing season, and I hope it's a very fruitful growing season.

To finish up, I also want to mention that this week is Canadian Fertility Awareness Week.

This is a nationwide movement dedicated to breaking the silence around fertility and family-building challenges, while advocating for equitable access to fertility care across Canada. This is a great time to educate and spread awareness about fertility services here.

I want to wish everyone a great day and a very eventful and productive week.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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, in particular those who are watching from District 27 Tignish-Palmer Road. Welcome to everyone who's in the gallery today: Dean MacArthur, Eddie Lund is back – nice to see you back here, Eddie – along with Mike Redmond and his son, James, and our other guests. Welcome to today's proceedings.

It is Volunteer Week, and it is an opportunity to stand here and thank all of the volunteers right across Prince Edward Island for their unselfish giving of themselves, for the time and the effort that they put into supporting different organizations and groups and communities right across Prince Edward Island. We certainly do appreciate them. A lot of communities would not run like they do without the support of volunteers, so thanks to each and every volunteer.

It was mentioned – farmers are on the land. I saw that in my passing this morning. They're out in their fields, so that's a good sign that summer hopefully is coming, and I do wish them a very safe season. Of course, we'll talk about the harvest a little later on in the year. I'm sure it's going to be a good one, or at least I pray and hope that it will be.

This weekend, I spent some time at the wharves up in my district. Saturday was quite busy. I would say most of the gear is probably on the wharf right now. There are still some boats to come into the water. Fishermen are looking forward to this weekend. Of course, there's a little bit of wind on Saturday, so we're still unsure if they're going to get out then or not.

Usually, the talk on the wharves any other year has always been the price of lobster and if

they're going to get out or not, but this year, there seems to be another conversation on the wharf that kept me there for most of the weekend. I'm sure we'll get onto that a little bit later.

With that, again, welcome everyone to the proceedings, and wish everyone a very productive day in the House.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome back to all my colleagues to another day of debate in the Legislature, and everyone watching online and in the gallery this afternoon. Great to see you, Mike Redmond, and son, James, out today. I hope everyone enjoys the debate in the Legislature this afternoon.

As has been noted, this is National Volunteer Week, and it's also the United Nations International Volunteer Year 2026 as well, so there's lots of opportunity for us all to celebrate and honour the hardworking volunteers that contribute so much to our province and our country and our world.

Just over the weekend, it dawned on me from the events we all go to as MLAs – they're mostly all run and operated by volunteers. A few of us were at the PEI Home and School Federation AGM on Saturday. Also, the Emergency Animal Response Team had their fundraising dinner and silent auction on Saturday evening. On Sunday morning, I was helping out at the Borden Legion pancake breakfast, and then in the afternoon, the Minister of Education and I went to the Guardians of the Children pinwheel event to raise awareness around child abuse.

All of these events were pulled off. The organizations are operated and run by – and the success that they all achieve is the result of all the volunteers associated with all of those organizations and many, many more. I look forward to having more discussion as the week goes on about the work that our volunteers do to our society.

[1:10 p.m.]

Finally, the Easter Seals tour has kicked off, I believe, at ten o'clock this morning. Rowan MacDonald, our 2026 Easter Seals PEI Ambassador, has a busy few days ahead of him

getting around to the schools, starting tomorrow morning. I'm sure many of us will have a chance to get out and participate with Rowan at some of these schools. He's going to be a great ambassador. It's always an exciting time to see the Easter Seals Ambassador touring the schools. I look forward to hearing more from Rowan as his week progresses.

Looking forward to the debate here this afternoon in the Legislature.

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

Hon. R. Croucher: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to say hello to anyone that's watching in District 1, especially Margaret Stewart. Margaret was born on this day in 1927. To save the math, that would make Margaret 99 years young today. Alongside her husband, Peter, in the beautiful community of Kingsboro, they raised four girls, which in itself is no small feat. But once their girls were grown, Margaret went back to school, becoming a resident care worker, and gave many years of dedicated service to the Colville Manor. Margaret had a love for travel and for many years was heavily involved with community organizations such as the Women's Institute and Girl Guides of Canada. Please join me in wishing Margaret a very happy birthday today.

And Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, it is actually RCW, PCW, and HSW Week. I would like to acknowledge all of the hardworking and dedicated staff right across the Island. Please know that you're appreciated.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

It's pleasure to rise today. Welcome to everybody home in District 22, and also welcome to everybody here in the gallery today.

I'd like to take a moment to extend my deepest condolences to my nephew, Jedd, and his brother, Blain, who lost their beautiful mom, Joyce Moore, on Sunday morning. Joyce was a wonderful lady, and she will be missed by many.

Also, Saturday, I attended the Prince County Horsemen's Club awards banquet. I'd like to say congratulations to all the award winners and just to reiterate that harness racing is alive and well here on Prince Edward Island.

This week is Canadian Fertility Awareness Week. This week shines a light on the realities of fertility in Canada, encouraging open conversations, education, and compassion for the one in six Canadians affected by fertility challenges. As Minister responsible for the Status of Women, supporting individuals as they navigate their reproductive health is a priority, and I'm committed to working collaboratively with the Minister of Health and Wellness in this important area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

R. Henderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, want to acknowledge those that are watching back home in the great riding of O'Leary-Inverness. I also want to welcome Eddie Lund. I've been here 19 years, and I don't know if there's ever been a sitting, spring or fall, that Eddie has actually missed at least the ability to come in and watch the proceedings. Great to see you here, Eddie.

While I'm on my feet, I guess I'm kind of stuck with having to acknowledge the event that I attended on Saturday, the A&E Legacy Foundation hockey trivia competition. I have to say I got defeated. Went down again to the Down-Easters, a team from Montague: Wayne Spin, Josh Lewis, and Kyle Cotton. They dared me to acknowledge them in the Legislature for their victory. But I did come second; the Perfect Ten came second. Brucie Martin's team from Tignish came third. I'll leave the Member from Alberton-Bloomfield to inform us of what his score was, but he wasn't in the top three, I do know that.

Thanks a lot, Mr. Speaker.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome all those in the gallery today, to Mike and his son, and also to

Dean, and all those watching from home in District 9 Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

I, too, had the privilege of attending the 73rd annual Home and School Federation AGM and conference this past weekend. It was truly a remarkable day to get to meet with so many parents, so many volunteers who keep the Home and School Federation quite active and quite successful. It was a great conference. Congratulations to those new board members, those who left, and also to award winners.

Last week we lost a long-time member of the provincial civic service, Mary Henderson. I had the privilege of working with Mary for many years during my time in government, and you could always count on Mary for her humour – her very dry humour – and her honest approach to everything that she did. She truly was an incredible woman.

[1:15 p.m.]

I would like to extend my sincere condolences to Mary's husband, Mike; her son, Derek; his wife, Tiffany; Mary's pride and joy, her baby granddaughter, Riley; her mom, Bertha; and her sisters, Darlene, Edith, Nancy, and Tanya; as well as Mary's many extended family, friends, and colleagues. Rest in peace, Mary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

S. Dillon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everybody back for a great day of debate, those who are in our gallery – thank you for coming – and those watching online, especially my neighbour, Eileen.

I'd like to mention that on Friday – I'd like to give a great big congratulations to all our law enforcement across our province who received awards with MADD Canada for keeping our Island roads safe from impaired driving.

As well, I attended the *Fascinating Ladies of Country* with my mom and Stacey and her mom, Sheila, at the Seniors Active Living Centre. It was so good, as the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park had mentioned last week. It was well worth attending.

Also on Sunday, the LETR, which is the Law Enforcement Torch Run, had their annual polar plunge, so a big shout-out to all those in law enforcement and our first responders who took part in that. As of today, \$39,000 has been raised for Special Olympics. I truly believe that that is a reason for the freezin’.

Finally, this is Canadian Fertility Week, and I look forward to sharing more with you later.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-Pownal.

B. Curran: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to recognize everybody watching from home, especially those in District 2 Georgetown-Pownal. I would also like to recognize constituents of mine from District 2, on the Brothers Road, Mike Redmond and his son, James. Mike actually lives in an old farmhouse that was passed down through our family. Mike and his family are able to enjoy it now. I think perhaps, Mike, we should talk to the Minister of Transportation about getting that road paved.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Saying hello to everybody watching from Charlottetown-West Royalty and everybody watching who is here today – Dean MacArthur, Mike Baglole, Eddie Lund, welcome. Helena and James Readman – is it Readman? Yeah, they’re joining us from British Columbia, I think. Welcome. All the way from British Columbia. It’s great to have you here today.

[Interjections]

G. McNeilly: And Mike, and especially James. James did come in. He’s got a keen interest in politics and civics. We were chatting before. The Deputy Premier talked about the 4-H speaking, and his presentation was on his first NHL hockey game, between the Montreal Canadiens and the Utah Mammoth. That was what his topic was on. Welcome, and thanks for coming in.

I, too, want to talk just for a second about Fertility Awareness Week. It is very important for a lot of families, especially in Prince Edward Island. I join us all in talking about that.

And Volunteer Week – lots of volunteers up in my district. I want to say a big shout-out for everything that you do. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing and Communities.

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

I just want to welcome all those in the gallery here with us today, especially Mike Redmond and his son, James. Mike is an important partner with my department. He’s on a list of names that I need to get in to speak with. I’m looking forward to the day that we can schedule that and have that conversation, Mike. Thank you for the hard work that you do, Mike, working in the shelter system.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Land and Environment.

Hon. D. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome everyone back for another great week, everyone joining us in the gallery, and everyone watching from District 4.

The peepers are out in stereo on the Ponds Road. I didn’t mention it last week because they were only on the south side of the point, but now they’re in stereo. All five ponds are singing, so that means spring is here. Spring has sprung.

I just want to say – as we talk about volunteers – we had a wonderful bingo at the Belfast Rec Centre on Friday, fundraising for the Belfast fire department. They raised over \$4,000 and had to put more tables out, more chairs. I want to thank everyone in the community, especially the fire department, for the work that they do. We are doing a big expansion, so the money is greatly needed.

Lastly, I would like to congratulate Bridget McCarthy. She put her boat in the water for the first time. She has her own fleet. I think she’s 19. Many of you know her mom, Bethany. She’s been my campaign manager for probably more years than most of the people sitting in here. But Bridget, she got her own fleet. She’s a force to be reckoned with, just like her mom. Bridget, I’m so proud of you. I love you. Good luck and have a great season.

Everyone, have a great day.

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

[1:20 p.m.]

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

As always, it's a pleasure to rise here in the Legislature. I want to welcome all the ones that have joined us in the gallery. Mike and James, I believe – great to see you here. I had a great chat with Mike here a couple of weeks ago. I appreciate all that you have done and continue to do for Islanders, Mike.

The Member from O'Leary-Inverness referenced with regard to the A&E Legacy hockey trivia event on Saturday evening. I do have to congratulate him and his team for finishing second. He mentioned his observation that my team was not in the top three. To be honest, it was probably in the bottom three.

One person that I do want to give a shout-out to, especially thinking and recognizing that this is Volunteer Appreciation Week, is Bill Mackendrick. Bill has been just a fantastic volunteer in so many ways right in the West Prince area. Bill has been quite instrumental with regard to the hockey trivia event, and inspiring, I would have to say, other volunteers through the West Prince area. So, a big shout-out to Bill Mackendrick.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I also just wanted to rise today and recognize Canadian Fertility Awareness Week. I know that one in six Islanders struggles with fertility.

I also wanted to pass along my condolences to Mary Henderson's family. She's a constituent of mine, and a big supporter; a card-carrying member. I finally got paved in front of her – we paved their road last year and widened it. We got paved shoulders on it. It finally got by their house down on route 17 in Sturgeon. They were after me for a few years to get that done, and finally got it done last year. I know she was due

to retire in two or three months' time from Rural Development. Very sad.

I just want to extend my condolences to her family, and especially her husband, Mike. I know that he'll miss her deeply. My condolences.

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

LPN Mentorship Program

T. DesRoches: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You know, our health care system was at a point of breaking, or some may even say that it was broken, but things are starting to look up in Summerside at the PCH. We see the wait times at the emergency department are consistently going down; not optimal or what we are used to having at our ER, but consistently going in the right direction.

We have seen the ICU downgraded to a PCU because we were short on internists, which hit a low of 1.7 FTE, and now is back running the way it was meant to be, with internists going to reach a full-time equivalent of eight in September when all new hires are started.

Just recently, we have heard of Health PEI retaining 10 of 11 graduating nurse practitioners from UPEI. The even better narrative to that story is that we have heard in this House that at least two of these nurse practitioners will be setting up shop in Summerside.

These are all great starts and initiatives to improve the delivery of health care at the PCH, but they're exactly that – a start. We need to continue to grow them. One such way to grow is to strengthen the ability and knowledge of the workforce that we have through programs that work – programs like the LPN mentorship program that has paired new LPNs with experienced LPN mentors that can teach them the ropes, so to say.

Recently, I have learned that this program may be stopped, that it's not budgeted for going forward, and this is disheartening as not only does it give our experienced LPNs a little pay boost but also a sense of reward, watching the new LPNs grow. As a newly hired LPN, I cannot think of a better way for them to learn

and grow – through a lead-by-example model that the mentorship program does.

In summary, I would hope that a program as valuable as this can be looked at and find a way to make it work.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Canadian Fertility Awareness Week

S. Dillon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to highlight the dedication of Dr. Tracy Malone,Carolynn Dubé, Ashlee London, and Stephanie Sullivan – four women who have played a key role in building awareness and understanding as well as key initiatives in advancing fertility services here on PEI.

[1:25 p.m.]

For far too long, those experiencing fertility challenges suffered in silence. These women have changed that. Through their tireless advocacy, education, and compassionate support, they have worked to ensure that Islanders facing infertility have been seen, heard, and supported, and that fertility care is treated as essential health care.

Their efforts are especially meaningful this week as it marks Canadian Fertility Awareness Week, observed nationally from April 19th to 25th. Across PEI, the week is recognized through community-led events focused on connection and hope. Stephanie and Ashlee have organized community events, including the Hope in Bloom gathering in Charlottetown and PEI's participation in Light the Night, where both the city of Charlottetown and the city of Summerside will be illuminated green in solidarity with families navigating infertility.

These activities remind us that fertility affects all of us – not just those that are going through fertility, but moms and dads, aunts and uncles, friends, cousins, neighbours, and the MLAs who have heard their story and invested in their journey. One in six Canadians struggle with fertility, and that's why compassion, policy change, and access to care truly matter.

To Dr. Tracy, Carolynn, Ashlee, and Stephanie: thank you for your courage, leadership, and your

unwavering commitment to Islanders on their fertility pathway.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Fulfilling Ministerial Duties

R. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The owner-operator policy of DFO was the most fundamental and foundational concept regarding PEI's inshore fishery. It basically states that the owner of the licence that permits a fisher to harvest any fish resource from Canada's waters has to be an operator or a participant during that harvest. It is a term or rule of the licence to its holder.

Therefore, it is very troubling, with the antics of the PEI government that have occurred since February 2026, that the current Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy would be stating on one hand that he supports the owner-operator policy, but on the other hand says he wants to appoint someone else to fish his lobster fleet. Now he wants to change to asking this Legislature – he wants to be a part-time minister.

Even more troubling was the fact that the PEI Premier says he went to the highest authority in government. No consultation with the industry occurred. No directive was passed by the PEI Fishermen's Association for a change to be made. No other provinces are requesting their ministers to be permitted to fish while serving their province.

And yet, so many more pressing issues exist within PEI's fishery, including the massive challenges PEI's oyster fishery is under. Thankfully, DFO has made its ruling to uphold the owner-operator policy: as long as the Minister of Transportation is in the boat, he can fish – to which I say, go fish.

I can assure you, as a former Minister of the Crown for PEI, I know the hours and commitment needed to fulfill one's duties. I would have calls any time of the day to sign ministerial orders. I had to attend Cabinet meetings on Tuesday morning, usually Cabinet committees on other days, meet with multiple groups and individuals about issues needing attention, and one never knew when a serious

issue confronted the portfolio where the minister had to be consulted, informed, or provide direction on the matter. It is a serious responsibility to be minister. Then, add on the minister's district duties.

This is really a question to Islanders: Are you okay with having a part-time minister for the Premier's most important file, the energy and transportation needs of this province?

This government's attitude of entitlement is beyond astounding.

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Islanders are facing a health care crisis, an affordability crisis, an energy crisis, and a government that has lost complete control of the books. Yet, instead of focusing on these priorities, this government is spending its time trying to change conflict of interest laws for one Cabinet minister. That tells Islanders everything about this government's priorities.

Conflict of Interest Act (further)

My question to the Attorney General and Minister of Justice: Why is this government prioritizing rewriting ethic laws for one minister while Islanders wait for action on the issues that actually matter?

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

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

We take this quite seriously. We have an exceptional MLA here. He's in our Cabinet right now doing an exceptional job.

[1:30 p.m.]

This is one of those issues that I think all Islanders agree needs to be changed. We're taking the approach – the proper way of doing it. We want to make sure that fishermen are represented across this Island, in this Legislature and in Cabinet, and they have the ability to do so.

I'm fortunate to be a dairy farmer. I'm fortunate that I can put my dairy quota into a trust. I can still milk my cows voluntarily every day, and boy oh boy, I put a lot of hours in. But I have two portfolios and I part-time farm as well, and I'm proud of it. Any fisherman on this Island can do it as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

So, obviously his assets aren't in that much of a blind trust.

This bill is being brought forward by a government backbencher, so let's be honest about what that means. Government wants to change but does not want to own it.

A question to the Minister of Justice: If this bill is so defensible, why is government hiding behind a backbencher to do your work?

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

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

This isn't a government bill; this is a private member's bill. Private members' time – we're doing government business during government time. This is a private member's bill and that's when it's appropriate to bring.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's a private member's bill because no one over there was brave enough to bring it to the floor.

The conflict-of-interest rule matters for ministers because their access to confidential information and decision-making powers could unfairly benefit their own interest. It also serves an important purpose in maintaining public trust. Instead, this government now wants to weaken it for one political colleague. When laws are changed for insiders, confidence in public office is damaged for everyone.

Question to the Minister of Justice: How does changing ethic laws for one minister protect either the letter or the spirit of that act?

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

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

We've been debating bills in this House all week. We had a great debate on bills last week, and we continue to have – we have more legislation today. This is the place to bring that discussion. This is the appropriate place. Private members bring in a bill so fishermen can sit in a Cabinet to represent not only their constituency, not only their industry, but their whole province.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

But everyone forgot to talk to the fishermen about this to see what they say. The PEI Fishermen's Association has spoken clearly. They oppose special exemptions. They defend owner-operator rules. They warn that one exemption leads to another until the policy means nothing.

The Premier thinks fishing is an eight-week job; however, those who really understand and respect the industry know that it's not. Government ignored them, and the Minister of Transportation asked for an exemption regardless, and it was rightly denied.

Question to the Minister of Fisheries: Did you support siding with one Cabinet colleague over the industry when he asked for the exemption?

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

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

I've made it clear in this Legislature previously that I wholeheartedly support the owner-operator policy, but to echo the comments of the Minister of Agriculture and Attorney General, we have lawyers here sitting in this Legislature, as they should be able to. We have dentists. We have farmers sitting in this Legislature, as they should be able to.

Whether it's the present MLA or looking to the future, we should have the openness to be able to provide the opportunity for qualified individuals – whether they're farmers, whether they're fishers, whether they're lawyers or dentists – to be able to sit in the Legislature and to sit in Cabinet.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Being a member of the Executive Council comes with privileges. Ministers get information that Islanders will never see, like fishing stocks and market trends, which would bring an advantage to a member serving in Cabinet that is also working full time in the fishing industry.

Question to the Minister of Fisheries: Have your constituents been advocating for changes to the *Conflict of Interest Act*, and will you be voting in favour of bending, breaking, and weakening the conflict rules while giving an unfair advantage to a sitting Cabinet minister?

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

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

[1:35 p.m.]

Have I heard from fishers in my riding, across the province, on issues, a number of issues? Absolutely. I do; I hear from fishers every day. I have meetings. I have discussions with them, not specifically with what the hon. Leader of the Opposition has put forward, but I will continue to be open to discussions on any matters with any fisheries organization/group.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Mr. Speaker, Islanders heard everything in that except for an answer.

Islanders are watching this government make it harder for seniors to access programs that allow seniors to live in dignity at their own home. All while doing so, this government has been laser focused on fixing problems their ministers are

facing rather than making the lives of Islanders – and especially seniors – better.

Question to the Minister of Social Development and Seniors: Have your constituents been advocating for change to the *Conflict of Interest Act*, and will you be voting in favour of bending, breaking, and weakening the conflict rules while giving an unfair advantage to a sitting Cabinet minister?

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

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

The hon. Leader of the Opposition has talked about no one wanting to bring this legislation forward from Cabinet, and yet, he won't bring the questions to me that he's targeting here today.

The Premier has long talked about this issue. He was named the permanent leader this year and wanted to bring this issue to a front and to get changes. I applied for a substitute operator. I know it's a complicated issue. That actually would keep the licence in my name and not enter into a corporate ownership, which is exactly what I think the industry wants, and I believe in the owner-operator policy that way.

That was denied, and that's fine. So, then I had asked for an extension to the deadline. I asked for 60 days. I was given ten days. We're working within that timeframe. If it doesn't happen, that's a story that we'll deal with this week.

I've had many personal conversations with all of you over this. It's an issue I think that needs to be dealt with. The Leader of the Opposition, I understand, might not feel that fishers should be able to sit at this point. We're trying to work within the timeframe we were given. If it's not done within that timeframe, I hope it is at some point.

I'm working hard every day on it. I think everybody in here knows that I've fished my entire time in here. I started – and I think did a decent job – in opposition asking the questions, I went to a House leader, I went to Deputy Speaker, I went to Speaker, and now I'm very privileged to be able to do this.

I think I might have missed an hour and a half one day of this sitting on a setting day that is

aligned. I'm committed to this role. My constituents know I'm committed to this role. I'm very privileged to have a licence. It comes secondary. I don't get to fish full hours very often. I certainly wouldn't if this legislation went through; I'll do that. But the key was keeping it in my name so that I can keep it in the family as well.

I appreciate the ability to explain this a bit further. It's a complicated issue. I'm sorry it's become a distraction. It's an awful thing, but hopefully, it'll work out sometime. If it doesn't work out this week, it doesn't work out, but I hope that it works out at some point for fishers and the future of PEI.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I hope you recognize that I did not ask that minister a question. I asked the Minister of Social Development and Seniors a question regarding her own constituents. That was two minutes of our time that was wasted.

Islanders are watching. The Minister of Social Development – over here, I don't know what you're laughing at. The Minister of Social Development and Seniors, you have a harbour in your district. You have fishers in your district. I'm going to ask you that question again: Have your constituents been advocating for change to the *Conflict of Interest Act*, and will you be voting in favour of bending, breaking, and weakening the conflict rules while giving an unfair advantage to a sitting Cabinet minister, yes or no?

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

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

The seniors in my community are actually wonderful seniors, and I deal with them all the time. They have never mentioned that they have a concern about this whatsoever. I would think that they'd like to see fishers in Cabinet positions here on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Mr. Speaker, this minister represents more than just seniors in her area. I asked of her constituents.

So, Islanders are still waiting outside for walk-in clinics, and they can't get access to the basic care that they need while government continues to prioritize themselves over others.

[1:40 p.m.]

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness. You had a lot to say; let's see what you say now. Have your constituents been advocating for change to the *Conflict of Interest Act*, and will you be voting in favour of bending, breaking, and weakening the conflict rules while giving an unfair advantage to a sitting Cabinet minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

It is nice that the opposition is finally getting around to asking some health questions. It's the top concern amongst Islanders, and I think they've forgotten about it here in this Legislature.

The hon. member knows that this bill will be debated in private members' time, not on government time. I'll be in Committee of the Whole today, passing hopefully two bills from my department. We passed one on Friday. I'm looking forward to that debate.

Honestly, what I'm focused on right now in our department is the federal government is cutting funding to our department. We have to step up to the table and put that – what do we have? The improving affordable access to prescription drugs, \$8.75 million – we are told that won't continue; mental health and substance use funding – \$2.6 million annual funding will be gone from the federal government; drugs and rare diseases, \$3.4 million, gone; aging with dignity, \$1 million, gone; aging with dignity, long-term care funding, \$1.3 million and \$1.2 million, gone; pharmacare for contraception and diabetes, \$7.4 million, gone. Where is the great Mark Carney now, Mr. Speaker?

Speaker: Members, just a reminder when it comes to responses: if you have detailed information, you can always table that and bring it back as a response. We need to be mindful of

our times when responding to questions, so I appreciate you adhering to those timeframes.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Islanders are listening, whether this government believes it or not – of course, they're tone deaf – but Islanders are listening. That was a long way to go to answering a simple question, and obviously, he didn't answer it.

Since this budget has been table, we've seen unfair cuts to education programs that Island families rely on. At the same time, this government has been focused on propping themselves up.

Question to the Minister of Education and Early Years: Have your constituents been advocating for changes to the *Conflict of Interest Act*, and will you be voting in favour of bending, breaking, and weakening the conflict rules while giving an unfair advantage to a sitting Cabinet minister?

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

Hon. R. Croucher: Actually, I've had a few conversations with a couple of constituents. Once I explained the process and what we're trying to achieve here and weeded through the misinformation that's being spread by perhaps the Leader of the Opposition, they understand it a little better. Fantastic conversations. I'll continue to have those with my constituents if they want to reach out to me.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'm not sure; I think they called me right after they were talking to you for the real answer.

We've seen former ministers and departments cut deals to benefit connected partisan friends at the same time as throwing out all the rules and policies that protect our previous environment. This is happening at the same time as government is prioritizing making changes that will allow ministers to take on a second job.

Question to the Minister of Land and Environment: Have your constituents been advocating for changes to the *Conflict of Interest Act*, and will you be voting in favour of bending, breaking, and weakening the conflict rules while giving an unfair advantage to a sitting Cabinet minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Land and Environment.

Hon. D. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. member, I feel like my constituents are out working hard to get on the land and in the water. I've heard from one constituent about this, and it was about the owner-operator end of this, which the federal government has already ruled on.

I fully support the member in this House, who is now a Cabinet minister, and I will continue to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's obvious with all these responses that they're not recognizing the constituents' needs within their district because we certainly are hearing about them.

Islanders are still finding it hard to find adequate housing for their family while this government wants to make changes to the *Conflict of Interest Act*.

Question to the Minister of Housing and Communities: Have your constituents been advocating for changes to the *Conflict of Interest Act*, and will you be voting in favour of bending, breaking, and weakening the conflict rules while giving an unfair advantage to a sitting Cabinet minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing and Communities.

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

I do feel fishermen are wrongfully excluded from sitting in Cabinet. I do support the member in trying to fix this for all fishermen. As of now, I do support the hon. member sitting in Cabinet until the debate happens on the floor.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have asked several times for the most current federal-provincial early learning and child care agreement action plan, which Islanders would fondly refer to as \$10-a-day child care.

[1:45 p.m.]

The last publicly available action plan ended in 2023, and we now know that the department is negotiating a plan for 2026-2032. That leaves a missing action plan covering 2023-2026. An action plan is where the details live, where Islanders can see exactly how the money is being spent.

Child care (further)

Question to the Minister of Education and Early Years: If this plan exists, and I believe it does, will the minister table the 2023-2026 action plan today in the House?

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

Hon. R. Croucher: I believe this question came up last week, and I do apologize. We are working on that. I won't be able to table that today, but I'll bring it with me tomorrow.

Thank you.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you for that.

Mr. Speaker, I have repeatedly asked government to clarify what criteria were used to decide when programs and services to Islanders were being cut. I was looking for evidence of program analysis, impact assessments, or even considerations of unintended consequences – something that would show that these decisions were thoughtful and defensible. Simply saying difficult decisions had to be made is not the criteria.

French language supports

Question to the Minister of Education and Early Years: Minister, what specific criteria did you use to decide which programs and services to

cut, or did you simply ask your divisions to give a percentage of their funding back?

I'll repeat the question, minister.

Hon. R. Croucher: No, I think I've got it.

C. Simpson: Okay.

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

Hon. R. Croucher: I just find it very hard that the member would ask such a question, coming from her role in the department once upon a time. She had mentioned throwing a dart at a piece of paper last week. I took exception to that as well because she knows that that's not the case.

That's a very complicated answer, member. There are a number of considerations that have to go into each and every cut that's made, each and every decision that's made to either expand a program or to cut it back. There's a tremendous amount of weight in making those decisions, a tremendous amount of input from staff, a tremendous amount of looking at how it impacts or what we have to supplement it with something else. So, that's a complicated question to answer.

Thank you.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, no criteria.

For Acadian and Francophone Islanders, maintaining their language in a minority setting is already a difficult challenge. On PEI, there is only one Francophone family resource centre, Cap enfants, serving families across the province. Through that centre, the *programme Dès la naissance* – From Birth – provided families with the tools and confidence to integrate French into daily life at home, helping to preserve both their language and culture.

Question to the Minister of Education and Early Years. Minister, you have said previously that children have a right to maintain their language. Why have you cut this program?

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

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

The program that she's talking about is a home-visit program that supports early French-language exposure and acquisition. Unfortunately, the uptake for this program slowed considerably in '25-26, with only eight new families, at a substantial cost. Normally we would see dozens of new families sign up annually. There seems to be a reduction in that.

It was another one of those decisions that had to be made during budget deliberations where we weigh the impact versus the savings, and the vast majority of our students who enroll in the French as a Second Language program do not use these services. So, that's one that I can stand by.

Thank you.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Language and culture are absolutely rooted to the identity of who people are.

Question again to the Minister of Education and Early Years. I understand that there are ten families currently using that service when it was cut – ten families that, without this service, face one of two decisions: Do you send your child to school in English or do you send your child to school in French, without that foundation? And it's not French immersion; it's French first language. In that, there is need then for additional supports and resources that for, really, a small amount could have been saved when that child was in their young home.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. R. Croucher: Mr. Speaker, there was no question in that, so I don't have any answer for it.

[1:50 p.m.]

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We remain the only province in Canada without legislation guiding procurement of services which accounts for tens of millions of dollars of spending taxpayers' money. Government procurement experts have described PEI's process as "shocking and highly unusual."

Over two years ago, the Minister of Finance, when asked by media to respond to the experts' concerns around the lack of transparency and erosion of public trust, said: "I couldn't agree with that more. I'm all for transparency."

Procurement of services

Question to the Minister of Finance. Last week, minister, you said you were still in the consultation phase of this change. Why is it taking two years and counting to get this bill off the ground that will protect Islanders' money?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability.

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

Yes, we had the stakeholder consultation. We are working through that this summer. I think we're expecting to bring legislation potentially through this fall.

Procurement of services is being added, which is a great thing. In this budget, you're going to see contract management taking place, which is a really good thing within government. So, we'll be able to pull information and be a little more transparent about contract management. I think that's good.

But all in all, it's not to say that procurement isn't being done well in Prince Edward Island. There are very strong procurement practices behind what we do every day in government. I do agree that procurement of services has to be added, and that work is being done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

M. MacFarlane: Unlike our Maritime neighbours, PEI does not make information on tenders for services available. Auditor General Darren Noonan has advocated for greater transparency, and again I quote the Auditor

General: "It's really hard to show transparency if you're not reporting anything, and then it's hard to hold people accountable if there's nothing to see."

Question to the same minister. This government has shown an increasing tendency to farm out services to third parties outside of government, often through sole-sourced contracts worth millions of dollars such as the Health PEI leadership arrangement and the recent development of the oyster fishery roadmap.

Minister, without legislation controlling procurement of services, and in the absence of reporting, how can Islanders trust that their money is being spent above board?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability.

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

We have trade agreements that we adhere to. We have Treasury Board policy that we adhere to. There are controls, absolutely, that are in there that we adhere to.

The contract management system is going to – right now, there's a decentralized system of contract management. The work is being done over the next two years – and potentially quicker – to pull that into one centralized system that's going to enable better reporting, and it's going to enable better data.

But as far as consultants being hired, there are lots of places where you need very temporary, very immediate, very specialized supports that you would lean on consultants to do and not necessarily hire full-time staff to do because it's very limited time; it's very specialized. So, there are consultants needed in the work we do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

M. MacFarlane: So, procurement of services, Mr. Speaker – we don't know how much we're spending. We don't always know who is getting the money. We don't know who else may have made a bid for the work. We don't know if the winning bid represents the best value for the money.

Back in 2024, the Finance minister stated that procurement legislation was a priority and her goal was to have it ready for the 2025 sittings – another example of government not doing the hard work that people have elected it to do. Once again, to quote our Auditor General, I am “disappointed but not surprised.”

Question to the same minister: Why, minister, if this truly is a priority, are we still waiting for the legislation you promised two years ago, and will we actually see it tabled this sitting, or will it be another victim of the Premier’s focus on himself, his party, and his Member from Morell-Donagh?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability.

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

We have done the work. We have not been sitting idle on this. Procurement of services is a priority. Centralized contract management is a priority. That work is being done daily. I meet with the procurement team. They are working on it, and we are going to bring legislation as soon as we can, but it’s going to be informed, and it’s going to be based on extensive consultation with people that use it. We’re getting very good feedback from stakeholders around the table on how to do this well, and we’re going to take the time to make sure that we do it well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

[1:55 p.m.]

It doesn’t seem that long ago this government claimed that it’s about people, presumably meaning people of all ages and abilities. There was even a memorable moment in this Chamber when the then Education minister, Natalie Jameson, stood up and sang: “I believe the children are our future.” I will not try and reproduce that today, Mr. Speaker.

Now it seems like the only people this government cares about are themselves, and the latest budget has this government turning its back on the little people on this Island – our children.

Government priorities (further)

A question to the Minister of Education and Early Years: What were you thinking when you tried to balance the books of this province by taking away the books of our children?

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

Hon. R. Croucher: Mr. Speaker, again, I had to have a lot of difficult conversations and make a lot of difficult decisions. That was one that certainly didn’t sit well with me.

Through some of the feedback that I’ve received from the numerous emails that I’ve had – and I’ve read every one of them – we’ve decided that we’re going to reinstate the Imagination Library. We’ve already informed the PEI Literacy Alliance that that’s happening.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Well, that’s the best thing I’ve heard all day, minister. Thank you for that. Let’s have another go.

Times, as we know, are pretty tough for many people. For so many Island families, trying to find that little extra bit of money for their children to enjoy one of the universal joys of childhood – riding a bike – is pretty hard.

The bike rebate, which so many Islanders have benefitted from, has also been cut by this government, removing the health, social, and economic benefits of getting on a bike.

A question to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: What were you thinking, minister, when you took our children for a ride by removing a program that would have given them a ride?

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

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

They don’t mind asking me questions when they want something.

[Interjections]

Hon. S. MacEwen: So, as you know, hon. member, those bike rebates were under the net zero program to reduce emissions. The bikes for kids aren't probably reducing many emissions, but it's an important program, and I understand the feedback that we're getting – how important it is. We want to encourage all, that kind of thing.

So, yes, we've extended that to the end of this month. We're debating the budget here shortly. That money won't come from the net zero funding, but if we want to extend that program out farther after this month, we'll look elsewhere in Transportation to do that kind of thing.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Well, two for two. Let's hope the Habs do that tonight.

Climate change was removed from the name of the department, and by far the biggest cuts in this budget are for environmental programs which were aimed, of course, at securing a healthy planet for future generations.

Under this government, wetlands have been sacrificed at discounted rates, beaches are cut off from Islanders just to suit party friends, our forests are being destroyed, and rivers are running red. No to bikes, no to books – although it seems like perhaps we've changed that, but certainly, no to our beautiful Island.

A question to the Minister of Land and Environment: What is wrong with this government that it cares so little about the future of this beautiful Island and the children who will live here long after we're gone?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Land and Environment.

Hon. D. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. member, this government does care about the children of this Island. We care about the Island itself. The department, which you're casting aspersions on because they enforce the rules around any environmental decisions, including wetlands – I said, and I said it on the news, that if there were changes in the application of what you're talking about, I would uphold them.

I am going to charge, as the minister, the full \$60,000 per acre if there is an application put in by the developer. I will uphold that, I will stand by that, and I will work hard within the department to ensure that we are doing what's right for PEI.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

S. Dillon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the 2026 Speech from the Throne, and with clear understanding of the financial pressures that families are facing across our province, government committed to strengthening fertility support for Islanders. That commitment was reinforced in the budget in 2026, which included a targeted new investment of \$20,000 for anyone seeking fertility treatment. Given that this treatment is time sensitive, it has created excitement within the fertility community.

Fertility supports

My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Do you have any information on the details or timeline or for when funding may be available for families to access?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

[2:00 p.m.]

It's a good question. I know the member has been a strong advocate, since she's been elected, on this issue.

There will be, I think, \$700,000 in funding for this new reworking of the program. It will be \$20,000. It will be an upfront payment, front-ended, because I know that there's a lot of difficulty upfront.

On exact timelines, I can't say for sure. There might have to be some regulation or legislation change. We would hope to roll this out sooner rather than later, but I can't give you an exact date right now.

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

S. Dillon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's been a clear ask from the fertility advocacy group to establish an advisory committee on fertility to help guide the rollout of fertility funding and ensure access to fertility care is accessible, equitable, and meets the patients' needs.

Question to the same minister: Is there a commitment to establish an advisory group, and when can this be expected?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. C. Deagle: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I know that we obviously want to take everyone's input and have them part of – they obviously have the lived experience in this. I think what we'll commit to is that the chief medical officer will sit down with this group and see what exactly they want and how we can move forward from there. But I think let's let that meeting take place and then we'll look at what we can do and see how that will all work.

I did miss this in my first answer, but there will be no income threshold as well on this program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

S. Dillon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to acknowledge and sincerely thank all the advocates and families who have shone a green light in bringing fertility supports in PEI to this point, and also for those who have been waiting, watching, and trusting that their government would see the need. We're so close.

Question to the same minister: Minister, will you commit to ensuring that these asks get across the finish line as soon as humanly possible?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I guess the short answer would obviously be yes. We'll work with Health PEI on how we roll this out. Obviously, we want to get this across the

finish line as soon as possible to help benefit as many Islanders as we can.

Again, thank you to the hon. member for her work over the last number of years on this.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

T. DesRoches: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the last month or so, I've received a number of emails. It was very disheartening to learn that the LPN mentorship program was stopped, a program that put so much into new LPNs right out of school. Just navigating those halls at the PCH would be a challenge, so having someone to lead the way would be great. A program that started, and was \$500 when it started, and they moved on to \$5 an hour for the mentors.... But you can't really put a price on the knowledge that they handed down.

LPN mentorship program

A question for the Minister of Health and Wellness: Minister, how many mentors are we talking? How many people would be enrolled in this program that would be enriching the knowledge of our young LPNs just coming out of school?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I'll be completely honest: I don't know what those numbers are. I didn't actually realize the member would be asking these questions today. If I had known, I would have told him that I gave the direction to Health PEI last week to reinstate this program.

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

T. DesRoches: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's great to hear. I imagine I'll have a job in front of me to respond to some of these emails.

Let's go back to that same minister. For a new hire that does not have a mentor, how would they learn without having the mentor in place if you were to take this program? We say that it's got to go back in place, but we know it has to go

in with the collective bargaining, and it has to go in front of the unions.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I believe this program was at a cost of around \$80,000. It was my understanding that Health PEI had this within their budget to continue offering this program. Obviously, it will be a part of the negotiations when they do start, but it is an important program to help new graduates as they enter the workforce and the mentorship that they need.

I think that this one is a no-brainer, so I asked if we could continue it and not pause it, and that's what Health PEI is doing.

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

T. DesRoches: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[2:05 p.m.]

That's great news. Let's just go back to that same minister for one last follow-up question on it.

Minister, we still realize that it is a great value and that a lot of people use it. You went back to your department and got them to see if they can't get this in. Is there opportunity to expand this and go with some other parts of the hospital that might benefit from mentorship?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I'm not sure if the hon. member means in terms of LPNs, but we'll have negotiations beginning soon with the union, so any discussions of that would be included within those negotiations.

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

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

Government told Islanders that students studying in health care fields would have full-time positions upon graduation, and those were the

words of government. Year after year, we continue to hear from our homegrown RNs and the ones reaching out to Health PEI looking for work, when it should be government knocking on their doors. Some nursing grads have expressed interest in working full time, only to be offered casual or part time.

Registered nurses

Question to the minister: Why are we not automatically offering full-time positions to Island-grown graduates when they graduate from RN positions?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

It is my understanding that the graduating class of UPEI, as of the end of last week or, if not, at least this week, should be all offered full-time positions.

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

G. McNeilly: Mr. Speaker, we're hearing differently from the actual grads themselves.

They're frustrated. They say the communication has been very poor to this point. They're feeling like they're being steered away from full-time work, and this seems confusing after that statement. At the same time, other provinces are reaching out to them and making much stronger offers to our graduates.

Question to the minister: Why are PEI grads not being offered full-time positions right now? It shouldn't have been done next week; it should have been done a month ago. Why wasn't this done, minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

It's my understanding that all the grads who were interested in working on PEI – and hopefully that's the majority of them – should be offered full-time positions. From my understanding, it was last week, but it might be this week. I can find out for sure and get back to the member.

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

G. McNeilly: I would appreciate that.

I'm going to stay on this – not because it's a new minister; because history.... In 2024 – I'm looking at an article right now where government didn't even talk to the grads. They forgot to send the letters to the graduates coming out, and I do not want that to happen again.

In that article, the head of the Nurses' Union said: "These nurses are graduating now and they are ready to be out and working, and they should have had their offers already.... It's not something that you give to them at convocation, it's not something you give them...a week before convocation. They should already be signed, sealed, and ready to work."

Question to the minister: When will this happen? It better happen very soon because the grads are watching.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I believe a number of them already have been offered full-time work; it could have been in the last number of weeks. But I do believe that the remainder of the class, if they haven't received a call yet, probably could expect one this week for full-time work.

Statements by Ministers

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

National Tourism Week

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

National Tourism Week is being celebrated right across Canada this week. Prince Edward Island's tourism industry has delivered another strong, record-breaking year, and that success speaks directly to the dedication of our tourism partners and operators in showcasing all that we have to offer. This includes tourism products ranging from our local food and culinary traditions to the memorable experiences found in each and every corner of our beautiful Island, and from our world-class golf and accommodations to the

genuine hospitality we are known for around the world. These are not just selling points; they are reflections of the care and commitment of the people behind them.

Tourism operators continue to invest, innovate, and raise the bar. They are a big part of why visitors choose Prince Edward Island.

[2:10 p.m.]

Tourism PEI is here to help our operators, and we do our best to help market our province as a premier destination. We help bring visitors here, but it is our operators who deliver the experience and keep them coming back. That commitment continues to strengthen our reputation worldwide and build confidence in the future of our tourism industry.

I want to extend sincere thanks to our Island operators, their staff, and our partners who have made tourism on Prince Edward Island the success that it is today. Their passion and their hard work ensure PEI remains vibrant, welcoming, and unforgettable. This week, we celebrate them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

R. Henderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

As a former Minister of Tourism, I certainly commend this industry. We have a fantastic product here in Prince Edward Island. We are really a premier destination. I have to commend the minister in saying the promotion of Prince Edward Island as that premier destination, but I think a lot of our increased visitation probably came from the announcement that Prime Minister Carney had on the reduction of the bridge tolls to \$20, and we did have fantastic weather. Let's hope that remains. But when we have good weather, sometimes it has impacts on other commodities as well.

I think our cruise ship numbers were up a bit, but they're projected to be a little bit lower.

But while I'm talking about some of the people that are involved in our industry, I do want to commend the Canadian Potato Museum, which the Member from Alberton-Bloomfield was at – great product there, and its visitation numbers are the top in western PEI – as well as the

Bideford Parsonage Museum and, once again, our oyster industry. Although maybe under duress for the coming year, we did have great products last year to promote Canada's Food Island.

With that, I commend the minister for the announcement, and I, too, want to celebrate Tourism Week in PEI.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister of Tourism for acknowledging Tourism Week, such a critical part of our industry, often included with fishing, farming, and of course, tourism to drive our economy forward.

I'd like to thank all the participants in our tourism industry for the hard work they do. I do hope, as I've expressed in this House before, that the change in the inspection services regime from Quality Tourism inspection services to moving internally in the department is working well for the tourism operators, and that the department is working collaboratively with them to find solutions and paths forward as opposed to an enforcement approach of using the stick as opposed to the carrot. I know that's the way it was done before with QTS; there was a lot of good collaboration between the groups at the time.

I'd love for the minister to promote some tourism in my district, District 19, the gateway to Prince Edward Island. Gateway Village could use a little bit of support. I think instead of maybe a fourth gas station as a tourism draw to Borden-Carleton, we could put some more supports into maybe the fabrication yard – could have something there as well – because it is the landing point for so many tourists who come to Prince Edward Island.

Last but not least, the last comment I'll make is I know last year for Tourism Week, the government promoted the government buildings and businesses to be lit up in green. I really hope that's the case again this year.

Thank you.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to thank the Minister of Education and Early Years for reinstating Imagination Library.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a letter requesting Imagination Library be reconsidered, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Education and Early Years.

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

I'm on a bit of a roll here today. I've reached out to my staff. I've got fantastic staff across at Sullivan Building. They actually did have the report ready for me, but I didn't take it with me.

[2:15 p.m.]

I'd like to table the 2023-2024 to 2025-2026 Canada-wide and 2023-2024 to 2024-2025 bilateral early learning and child care action plans, to be tabled today, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table an article from May 24th, 2024, and it's entitled "PEI Nurses' Union frustrated over big delays in job offers for new grads," and this was when Health PEI forgot to send the letters to the graduating class, thus making the basis for my questions today. I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

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

R. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, as chair of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability, I beg to introduce the report of the said committee on committee activities, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park, that the same be now received and do lie on the Table.

Pursuant to rule 110(5) of the *Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island*, I will be moving the motion for adoption of the report Wednesday, April 22nd, 2026.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

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

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

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, that the 15th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 15, *An Act to Amend the Regulated Health Professions Act*, Bill No. 15, in committee.

Speaker: Minister.

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'd like to ask the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

[S. Dillon 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 Regulated Health Professions Act*.

Promoter, do you have a stranger you'd like to bring onto the floor?

Hon. C. Deagle: Yes, please.

Chair: Shall it be granted? Granted.

Please state your name and title for Hansard.

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

Chair: Promoter, do you have an opening statement?

Hon. C. Deagle: No. We can jump right into questions if you wish.

[2:20 p.m.]

Chair: On Friday, we just opened this, and we didn't even really get into it, so I will ask now: Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be read clause by clause, section by section, or open for general questions?

An Hon. Member: General questions.

Nichola Hewitt: Can I give you a bit of background?

Chair: You sure can.

Nichola Hewitt: Alright. So, a lot of this came about as a result of requests that came in from the regulatory colleges. As you know, I don't come in a lot with any particular bill; I wait until we've got a few things to deal with.

One of the things we've done is we've updated the definitions section. We've also updated right-making powers with respect to creating amalgamated colleges. We've updated registration requirements and removed one requirement, and that is the eligibility to work in Canada, requiring a registrant to be eligible to work in Canada. This legislation is all about training and qualifications; it's not about labour type things, things that would be related to employment. So, we've removed it at the request of the colleges.

We've also removed a deeming provision with respect to English language proficiency. Subsection 12(4) says if we have an applicant from another Canadian jurisdiction, this facilitates labour mobility – we're going to deem

them to have met the educational requirements and met the competency requirements and the currency requirements, and it currently says we'll also deem them to be proficient in English. Well, we've realized that that was an error on my part because not every province requires a registrant to be proficient in English – for example, Quebec – and New Brunswick allows registrants to be proficient in either language. So, we don't want unilingual Francophones applying and – so that's why that's been changed.

Then, last but not least – and I think it's the Leader of the Third Party who pointed this out to me a few years ago – there's a grammatical error. We're missing the word "and" in subsection 24(1). And in 86(1)(b), we've used the word "on" instead of "in."

Those are the types of changes we're doing, and I will say, we sent it out to all the regulatory colleges and the ones that got back to us were fully supportive.

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

G. McNeilly: Thanks a lot. Welcome back, and thanks for that.

You just mentioned – well, first, I want to kind of say the streamlining. Anytime you say taking out things in the act, how will that affect – it'll make it more streamlined, but...? I was just thinking about your opening statement.

Nichola Hewitt: Are you talking about removing the eligibility to work in Canada requirement?

G. McNeilly: Yes.

Nichola Hewitt: Okay. What's happened is, as we can all appreciate, the immigration legislation, which is federal, is changing all the time. The colleges, some of which are quite small, are finding it very difficult to keep up.

The purpose of this legislation is to protect Islanders, first and foremost, by regulating health professions, requiring base education standards, currency, competency, professional liability insurance. Nothing other than that one provision is tied to employment. It's up to the employer to ensure that the employee is eligible to work in Canada, not up to the regulatory body, so that's why we're removing it.

I will add that's consistent with – so, I just did some random checks in legislation in other provinces. For example, it's not in the Alberta legislation. I did note that there is a provision that the bylaws may require it, so I started looking at what professions required it; couldn't find a single one.

Nothing in the medical act in Saskatchewan. Nothing in the RHPA in Manitoba. Ontario – looked in the *Medicine Act* and the *Nursing Act*; nothing. New Brunswick *Nurses Act* – nothing. Nova Scotia *Nursing Act* – nothing. Newfoundland RN act and the *Health Professions Act* – nothing.

We were sort of the odd person out, and it was just making it difficult for the colleges. And again, it doesn't speak to their training or their qualifications.

[2:25 p.m.]

G. McNeilly: Yeah, and I think it seems like it'll be good. Anything that we can do to streamline – I guess the only thing we look at is, okay, it'll provide less work for the colleges and they won't have to look at that, necessarily.

You mentioned you talked to a bunch of them. You didn't hear back from all of the colleges? What was the consultation piece like, and did you get enough –

Nichola Hewitt: Oh, this was done last summer. It was done a year ago; we were consulting with them. I don't always hear back from everybody, so everybody who replied – I know I heard back from I think it was about nine or ten of them, because of course, we've got one registrar for six of the colleges.

This had originally come to us from the College of Pharmacy, this request to remove that, and that would have been a couple of years ago. Like I say, I kind of collect these things as they come along.

G. McNeilly: That was a year ago; a lot happened since that time. We talked about how things are different in different provinces – I'm thinking about trade barriers and different things like that – since probably the time you were consulting to now.

Would you have changed anything?

Nichola Hewitt: No, not at all.

G. McNeilly: Nothing? Okay.

I'm good for right now.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thanks, Chair. Thanks, Nichola, for coming back to talk about this act.

I only had, really, just a small question that jumped out at me. It's all very self-explanatory, of course. It's in the definitions section for (h), health profession, and there was a decision made to add "specialized knowledge" to the definition of...

Is that just to keep us in line with other jurisdictions? Is that where that comes from?

Nichola Hewitt: Yeah, because as you can appreciate, a registered nurse would have specialized knowledge. She or he wouldn't just have skill and judgment; it would be specialized in nursing, the same as a pharmacist, or a medical practitioner, or an optician – whatever.

M. MacFarlane: So, again, that's just to catch up our definition with other jurisdictions? There's nothing else that...?

Nichola Hewitt: Correct.

M. MacFarlane: Okay.

That's all I had, Chair – just that question.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Chair.

Hi. It's nice to see you again, Nichola.

In doing so, I understand this is not related to labour mobility per se, but would there be anything in the changes here that might interfere with what meets the standard for a nurse or a physician – or perhaps not a physician – across the country, or are the requirements basically, for professional designation, the same for all professional groups that would fall under this act?

Nichola Hewitt: What 12(4) does is it says: look, if you're registered in another province, we trust that they've vetted you appropriately. We're prepared to register you here. You have to provide the equivalent of a letter of good

standing, a criminal record check, prove you've got liability insurance, and be proficient in English because that's our language here. That's it.

C. Simpson: I think I understand this. That is related to labour mobility; one jurisdiction says okay, then we're just accepting that. Is that consistent – would you suggest – to the 12 provinces and territories?

Nichola Hewitt: Yeah.

C. Simpson: Okay.

I'm fine.

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Hon. C. Deagle: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Regulated Health Professions Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. C. Deagle: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. C. Deagle: Madam Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

[Hon. B. Trivers in the chair]

S. Dillon: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Regulated Health Professions Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

[2:30 p.m.]

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, that the 13th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 13, *An Act to Amend the Ambulance Services Act*, Bill No. 14, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: Minister.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 14, *An Act to Amend the Ambulance Services Act*, read a second time.

Speaker: Minister.

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

[S. Dillon 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 Ambulance Services Act*.

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

Hon. C. Deagle: Yes please.

Chair: Shall it be granted? Granted.

Please state your name and title for Hansard.

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

Chair: Thank you.

Promoter, do you have an opening statement?

Hon. C. Deagle: Sure, Chair.

The purpose of this bill is to remove the requirement for an operator to appoint a medical advisor, update definitions and terminology, replace gendered language, and improve wording. We have consulted with Island EMS, and they are fully supportive of this amendment.

Chair: Now, is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be read clause by clause, section by section, or open for general questions? Thank you.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Thank you very – okay. It looks like we're –

Nichola Hewitt: Can I give you your background?

G. McNeilly: Yes, please, sure. Might as well we start with that.

Nichola Hewitt: This harkens back – well, well before 2012; I believe at least until 1999. In those days, the regulation of ambulance services was under part 2 of the *Public Health Act* as it then was.

In 2012, we brought three bills before the House. One was for a new *Public Health Act*, one was for ambulance services, and one was for emergency medical technicians. At that time, a lot of what we did was just basically hived out what was in the *Public Health Act* and plunked it down here. It by and large just amended the wording a bit, but it's worked quite well for us.

The EMT act was repealed – I'm going to think the repeal was proclaimed about two years ago, and they're no longer called EMTs; they're now called paramedics, and they've got their own college under the *Regulated Health Professions Act*.

Again, I've collected things along until we have a substantive amendment. One of the purposes of this is to update definitions and terminology. We got rid of the EMTs and now refer to the college and paramedics. There's also gendered language and improved wording throughout.

The big change here is that it removes the requirement for a medical advisor to be retained by the ambulance operator. We have a provincial ambulance services director under clause 3(2)(d) of the act. They're appointed by the minister, and part of their function is to monitor and facilitate compliance by operators and paramedics with the act and the regs and the protocols. At the same time, we have clause 6(2)(b), which requires the operator – this provincial ambulance services director is a physician – to retain a physician as medical advisor, and they do the exact same thing.

[2:35 p.m.]

So, we've got duplication, and it had just come to a point.... First of all, we're the only jurisdiction that has two doctors doing the same thing – one appointed by government, one appointed by the operator, but the exact same job – in terms of this particular responsibility.

It's time to streamline it, and the operator agrees; it's time to streamline it and have only the one provincial ambulance services director who oversees it.

That's the big change in here, and that's it.

G. McNeilly: That's a great description. I'm following you. I didn't realize there were two people doing the same....

Nichola Hewitt: There's a lot of – I mean, don't get me wrong; the provincial ambulance services director does a bunch of other things as well, but there's just overlap at certain areas.

G. McNeilly: If there's just one now, what were each of them doing before? Are we talking about training purposes here, like when they go in for yearly training, or is this just complaint-based?

Nichola Hewitt: No, it's neither, actually.

The provincial ambulance services director – I'm sure you don't want me to read this out, but they act as a medical consultant to the minister. They establish protocols and things that the paramedics are required to follow. So, it could be if you're presented with these facts, these are the things you do, these are the tests you run, these are the drugs you administer; so, these are all the protocols. They're set by the provincial emergency director. Then, he monitors compliance by the paramedics and provides a

copy of the protocols to all the paramedics. That's what his job is.

The one that's appointed by the operator is to monitor and facilitate compliance by the emergency medical technicians employed by the operator. It's the same thing. He's doing the exact same thing.

So, there's just a lot of duplication, and I think it was a word you used a while ago: streamlined. That's what the attempt is here is – just to streamline it.

G. McNeilly: Does the operator need supports at all during this transition, or is it just like...? Nothing will be...? Yeah. Anything in the...? Are there any adjustments to the regulations or anything that...? Nothing at all. Okay.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Chair.

You've actually answered my question, I think, Nichola, but I'm wondering.... That makes perfect sense: why duplicate? But would there be a clinical supervisor on shift, like you would see in a hospital setting – there's always a supervisor? Or is just streamlined – protocols are in place, paramedics know what to do, done?

Nichola Hewitt: That's correct. And don't forget, as well: these paramedics are all regulated by their college as well, so there's that extra level. It's just that we've got two streams of oversight, but we've got a third one as well, and we're just trying to take that off. That's all it is.

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

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Hon. C. Deagle: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Ambulance Services Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. C. Deagle: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. C. Deagle: Madam Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

[Hon. B. Trivers in the chair]

S. Dillon: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Ambulance Services Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

[2:40 p.m.]

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, that the 16th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 16, *An Act to Amend the Real Property Act*, Bill No. 12, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: Minister.

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

Clerk: Bill No. 12, *An Act to Amend the Real Property Act*, read a second time.

Speaker: Minister.

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Housing and Communities, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'd like to ask the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

[S. Dillon in the chair]

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

Promoter, do you have a stranger that you would like to bring onto the floor?

Hon. B. Thompson: I do.

Chair: Shall it be granted? Granted.

Please state your name and title for Hansard.

Blair Barbour: Blair Barbour, legislative specialist for the Department of Justice and Public Safety.

Chair: Promoter, do you have an opening statement?

Hon. B. Thompson: Chair, this act amends the *Real Property Act* to update provisions respecting the procedure for partition of land in respect of proceedings involving minors. These changes are intended to better align the act with contemporary civil procedure in the Supreme Court and to clarify the legislative text.

Chair: Thank you.

Is it the pleasure of the committee to have the bill be read clause by clause, section by section, or open for general questions?

Some Hon. Members: General questions.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair. Welcome back, Blair.

I guess I'm always interested when we see amendments coming forward to legislation that is relied on a lot by the practicing bar as to the consultation and the feedback. I always start with that question, and I'm curious as to what the feedback may have been from that consultation on this particular bill.

Blair Barbour: Sure, and I can give a little background too.

This file actually was initiated by a request from the family law committee of the Law Society. What they noted was that the existing text of the rather aged *Real Property Act* sections on partition of land were actually an obstacle from a civil procedure perspective to them being able to get partition of land and resolution of related proceedings done in an efficient and effective way. So, they asked us to look at it and make some changes to the act to align the act's procedural provisions with the civil procedure that's currently incorporated in the rules of court.

That was really the goal of going through this project; it was not to change the underlying legislative policy of the act's sections on partition, but actually just to try to bring it up to date and in alignment with the rules of court.

[Hon. J. Redmond in the chair]

In terms of the consultation we had generally, we did put this out for public consultation. It did go to the Law Society, as did the pieces we discussed last week. I know that we did get correspondence from the chair of the real property committee of the Law Society, and again, he didn't have any concerns with it. The family law committee came back to us and said that they were satisfied that we addressed the concerns that they raised originally.

[2:45 p.m.]

We also consulted with the Supreme Court in respect of the judicial administration of these sorts of proceedings to make sure that we were properly aligned with how they thought these sorts of proceedings should work, from a procedure perspective.

M. MacFarlane: I'm just going to pick up on a couple of items from the response that you just gave, Blair. You mentioned the family law bar largely drove or pushed or supported the amendments. Was there anything as part of that reference or tie-in with the process surrounding either dissolution of marriage or common-law separations dealing with land interest holdings at the time? Because one of the questions I had was surrounding a matrimonial interest in land.

[S. Dillon in the chair]

I'm looking at the definition of who may commence partition proceedings, and then it reverts back to co-owners of an interest in land

may commence a partition proceeding. "Interested person" is a person with an interest in land. Was any of that brought to try and strengthen the rights of a spouse on separation?

Blair Barbour: No, not specifically. The interest of the family law committee was to deal with a procedural issue. Any changes in language you have, the intent was to update the language to make it easier for people to read and to understand. The language of the old part is rather dated.

When we took on this project, we very much took on the primary issue we were dealing with – align the process with the regular civil process under the rules of court – and second was to update the language so that it was easier for people to navigate the partition proceedings. As the member might be aware, we do have self-represented litigants sometimes who try to take this on, and the old language is very difficult for people to navigate. That usually results in things slowing up in court when they arrive with their application.

M. MacFarlane: Yeah, the language is terrible to work with in the old act, and I'm glad to see there's an attempt to make it easier to follow and to bring an action or a proceeding. I guess that's my next question.

It's an odd process because – it used to be, at least, and maybe that's my question, Blair. Is there still the requirement to – you start an application or a statement of claim, then you had to bring a petition underneath that, and it'd be a petition for partition underneath an originating pleading. Is that still the same...? Because that's complicated for anyone.

Blair Barbour: The primary difficulty is that the *Real Property Act* provisions required one to initiate the claim by a petition. Unfortunately, the rules of court don't provide for petitions to be made.

A lot of credit to the members of the bar who took this on. They used some ingenuity to wrap the petition up into a form that was prescribed by the rules of court in order to file it and get it in front of the court.

You put your finger on it: that was the fundamental problem they had. When you're looking at this, as someone who's never done a partition proceeding before, it wasn't clear at all

in the statute or the rules of court how you actually make a square peg fit a round hole.

M. MacFarlane: So, when we look at the provisions of the bill that talk about originating pleadings, the partition proceeding, and then section 21, “Originating pleading, contents,” is it the department’s position, Blair, that it’s streamlined or easier now to navigate? Because there’s still a connection between this legislation and the *Rules of Civil Procedure*. So, you have to look at both in conjunction when you’re preparing your document.

Blair Barbour: Yes. Substantively – again, we tried not to change the legislative policy behind the policy. So, the requirements that you would have seen in the old text, we have aligned with as much as possible, but we’ve done it in a way that it can be brought forward in the same manner we would bring forward a modern civil proceeding – by notice of application or by statement of claim.

M. MacFarlane: And as part of these amendments, does the Law Society then have to make amendments to the *Rules of Civil Procedure* to implement this?

[2:50 p.m.]

Blair Barbour: The rules committee of the Supreme Court – yes, they will. You’ll notice that we have a proclamation clause. It’s on proclamation of the Lieutenant Governor in Council. We’ve done that because the rules committee needs time to get an amendment to the Supreme Court rules to align with the new text.

Absolutely, I’ve been in consultation with the registrar of the Supreme Court who sits on that committee, and we have indicated to them that we will wait for the rules to be updated so that the amendment and the rules amendment come into force simultaneously.

M. MacFarlane: Just going back to – I touched on the question earlier, Blair, with respect to who may commence a partition proceeding and when we sort of follow that around to see who an interested person is, and then who an applicant is, the definition of co-owners. Has there been any change to who may commence the partition proceeding?

I guess I had touched on it earlier as far as someone who might have a matrimonial interest

in property but may not be a co-owner as that term is defined, and similar, maybe an interest in an estate of a deceased person.

Blair Barbour: We did not make changes in respect of who may commence the proceeding substantively. What we did, though, is take the long list of the different people and we put it into the definition of co-owner so that now when you read the statute, you have a definition of co-owner, which means joint tenants, tenants in common or coparceners of an interest in land. That is currently in the *Real Property Act*.

In 20(1), we’ve used that definition of co-owner to keep the section concise and make it easier to read.

Chair: Do you still have a question on this? Because the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park has a question as well. Maybe I’ll go to her and come back to you.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Chair.

Blair, a few moments ago, you said there would be people who might be before the courts who would be litigating on their own behalf. With this change, will there be – or how will there be – some efforts made to help a common, everyday person understand what might be otherwise complicated legal language?

Blair Barbour: Well, the first and primary thing we would always do is try to clarify the language in the legislation so that when you’re reading it, you can actually grasp it. The existing language in the *Real Property Act* around partition is difficult for lawyers to understand, never mind anyone.

Beyond that, you’ve identified just a general problem with access to justice in the civil legal system. This is a private matter; it would be between two private parties. Similar to other legislation we have, it deals with interest between private parties. So, the department really doesn’t have a formal role in terms of promoting an understanding of every piece of legislation we have that might affect civil rights.

C. Simpson: Okay, that makes sense to me. But then, if this is sometimes related to, let’s say, a common-law or marital relationship, would there be – and perhaps the member has already

asked this, but to my mind, would there be a connection between an act that would handle divorce and separation? Do these two pieces speak to one another?

Blair Barbour: They do. One of the advantages of cleaning up the process is that you're able to have the matters consolidated in the same action when you're going forward. You would use the normal rules that we have for consolidation of any civil matter.

If you do have an action dealing with property in the context of, let's say, a matrimonial matter, you would be able to have this considered in the same instance. Currently, I understand from what we've been told, you'd actually have to initiate a separate proceeding and then make the application to bring them together, instead of filing them as one.

[2:55 p.m.]

C. Simpson: That's a good distinction. So, people would have to know that they have to tie it together for themselves, and there may be other pieces of legislation – like we spoke about the *Wills Act* and so forth – but a good lawyer would guide people.

So, this makes it more equitable and clearer and fair for people; modernizes, basically.

Blair Barbour: It makes certain that the process is aligned with the rules of court and avoids the confusion that comes from the misalignment. It also cleans up the language, hopefully, so that when people read it, they don't get blocked from understanding, basically, what the process is.

That said, there's only so much we can do by cleaning up the language, and I still think it would be a complex thing for a self-represented person to take on.

C. Simpson: I'm good, thank you. Thanks, Blair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

So, you had mentioned the changes would be coming through the Rules committee with respect to the *Rules of Civil Procedure*, Blair. I believe that's where this would be found – the evidentiary requirement and documentation

proof to get through the door and to support your petition.

Are you aware of any substantive changes with respect to what might be needed to bring a successful petition for partition?

Blair Barbour: No, I'm not aware of any changes of that sort. As I said, what we did when we went through the act was try not to change the substantive requirements of the scheme. We were merely looking to align it with the *Rules of Civil Procedure* and clean up that language.

M. MacFarlane: Okay, and I think just further to that answer, I guess the answer would be the same as far as any change to what the court is able to order by way of relief, further to a petition? Has that largely been held the same?

Blair Barbour: No change was implemented. Again, we were mirroring, as much as we reasonable could, the existing statute.

M. MacFarlane: I guess my last question would be – and again, just further to these two answers you've given, Blair, there's nothing that we haven't touched on, is there, of a substantive change that would be material enough to talk about by way of the process or the language in the previous bill?

Blair Barbour: Not that I can think of. When we went through, we did clause by clause; tried to translate the old into the new. Where we found that there was overlap with the *Rules of Civil Procedure* – we removed those clauses in the bill that would be redundant with those *Rules of Civil Procedure*.

M. MacFarlane: Okay, thank you.

Chair: Do you want one more?

M. MacFarlane: Yes, please, and it's just a comment. I think I expressed it last time, Blair. I appreciate the department's attention to some of these outdated pieces of legislation that have been a struggle for the bar to work with, let alone laypeople, and it's nice to see some attention to modernize the bills.

Thank you for that.

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Hon. B. Thompson: I move the title.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. B. Thompson: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

[Hon. B. Trivers in the chair]

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

[3:00 p.m.]

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, that the 11th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 11, *An Act to Amend the Powers of Attorney and Personal Directives Act*, Bill No. 13, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: Minister.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 13, *An Act to Amend the Powers of Attorney and Personal Directives Act*, read a second time.

Speaker: Minister.

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

[S. Dillon 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 Powers of Attorney and Personal Directives Act*.

Promoter, do you have a stranger you'd like to bring onto the floor?

Hon. B. Thompson: Yes.

Chair: Shall it be granted? Granted.

Please state your name and title for Hansard.

Blair Barbour: Blair Barbour, legislative specialist with the Department of Justice and Public Safety.

Chair: Thank you.

Promoter, do you have an opening statement?

Hon. B. Thompson: Yes, Madam Chair.

This act repeals clauses 1(1)(r) and (s) of the *Powers of Attorney and Personal Directives Act* and substitutes with clauses to correct errors inadvertently introduced as consequential amendments by the new *Public Guardian and Trustee Act*.

Chair: Now, is it the pleasure of the committee to have the bill be read clause by clause, section by section, or general questions? General questions.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

Just a question on the definition of “service provider,” Blair. Is that coming into this bill because it’s elsewhere in the other legislation referenced?

Blair Barbour: Perhaps I can give a little background here. In the *Public Guardian and Trustee Act*, in one of the end sections, we had a consequential amendment to the *Powers of Attorney and Personal Directives Act*. The purpose of that consequential amendment was to change the definition of “public trustee” to “public guardian and trustee” to reflect the new office.

Unfortunately, I missed – we had the wrong clause referenced, and it took out the definition of “service provider” that was there. Our legislative counsel office identified it for me, and we brought this forward basically to restore the definition of “service provider” this House has previously approved and to put in the proper definition for “public guardian and trustee.”

Hon. B. Thompson: We all make mistakes.

[Laughter]

M. MacFarlane: Well, thank you, Blair, and I’m sorry for asking that question...

[Laughter]

M. MacFarlane: ...that you had to answer. That’s all I had.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Hon. B. Thompson: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Powers of Attorney and Personal Directives Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. B. Thompson: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

[3:05 p.m.]

[Hon. B. Trivers in the chair]

S. Dillon: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Powers of Attorney and Personal Directives Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability, that the 24th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 24, *Government Reorganization Act*, Bill No. 25, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: Minister.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 25, *Government Reorganization Act*, read a second time.

Speaker: Minister.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'd like to ask the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere to continue to chair the Committee of the Whole House. You're being very efficient today, hon. Deputy Speaker.

[S. Dillon in the chair]

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

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

Hon. B. Thompson: Yes, I do.

Chair: Shall it be granted? Granted.

Please state your name and title for Hansard.

Blair Barbour: Blair Barbour, legislative specialist with the Department of Justice and Public Safety.

Chair: Thank you.

Promoter, do you have an opening statement?

Hon. B. Thompson: I do. Madam Chair, I just want to recognize my stranger here today. If there's such a thing as rock stars in the Department of Justice, I have one beside me here.

[Hear, hear!]

Hon. B. Thompson: Blair keeps throwing around this word of retirement, and we refuse to let him do that. I think he adds so much to the department. I can't explain my gratitude towards that.

This bill updates the departmental names, ministerial titles, and various statutes to align with reorg of the government departments announced in February.

Chair: Is it the pleasure of the committee to have the bill read clause by clause, section by section, or open for general questions? General question.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Chair.

I would agree with you, member; Blair's retirement scares us all a little bit.

Question. I would have thought that there would be – no, I'm going to reframe that. I assumed or thought I knew that there was an existing act that would have already taken care of this, so was surprised to see this arrive.

Is this something that is done every time there's a reorg? Because I thought there was existing legislation.

Blair Barbour: As I understand it, the *Public Departments Act* does provide for the immediate renaming of ministerial titles and departmental titles, but that act doesn't provide for the amendment of the various references throughout the statute book to the departments and the ministers. That's what this particular bill is doing.

C. Simpson: Blair, once this bill comes into law, does it have to come back every time a department is reorganized, or does this cover it off as we go forward?

Blair Barbour: We do this every time we rename and reorganize departments.

C. Simpson: It happens every time. Okay.

Blair Barbour: Yes.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Chair.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I would echo everybody's comments, Blair. I hope you stay with us for many years yet to come.

A couple of questions on this. I think there are six departments that are impacted by name changes this time around, but had it just been one, that would have still required a piece of legislation like this?

[3:10 p.m.]

Blair Barbour: Very much so. Now, I can't remember the last time we did this, but typically we do it as a government reorganization act. If it were one department, it's quite possible if we had a miscellaneous statute amendment act, it

might also fit in that as well. That would really fall within the protocol used by our legislative counsel office about how to package it, but the end result would be the same. We would need an amending bill to amend those statutory references to ministerial titles and department names.

P. Bevan-Baker: So, I understand that there are some legislative changes as a result of the name changes. There would also be pretty significant IT work involved, I would imagine; some signage; paper – everybody's cards. It's a pretty large – and I realize this is not particularly a legislative question, but maybe the minister could help here.

Do we have any idea, historically, how much it costs to change the name of a department?

Hon. B. Thompson: I don't have that with me, but maybe during budget estimates, that might be a good question to ask.

P. Bevan-Baker: That would be great. I would look forward to that. I don't imagine it would be an enormous amount, but we have six departments here; let's imagine it cost each of them \$35,000 to do all of those changes. You've paid for the books that were.... So, added together, that would be \$210,000; exactly what that program would have cost.

Chair: Member, do you have a question on the legislation?

P. Bevan-Baker: Yes, I do, Chair.

I'm wondering; my question, I guess, is the value.... I would like to think that government has to demonstrate a value to Islanders for all of the expenses that come forward, and this is not an insignificant one, so I'm just wondering what value, minister, in your opinion, do these name changes provide for Islanders?

Chair: I'm not sure how that ties into the legislation, but perhaps....

Hon. B. Thompson: I guess it represents the directions of the departments. From my observation, the signs on the department doors are paper copied, I believe, and my business cards changed, I think, once.... But every time there's a shuffle, those business cards change as well.

P. Bevan-Baker: Right. I get that, minister, your particular cards, but every single employee within every single department that is impacted would also require new cards. Again, it just strikes me as a pretty considerable expense, and I'm just trying to understand the value to Islanders.

I have no further questions, Chair.

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Hon. B. Thompson: I move the title.

Chair: *Government Reorganization Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. B. Thompson: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. B. Thompson: Madam Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

[Hon. B. Trivers in the chair]

S. Dillon: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having had under consideration a bill to be intitled *Government Reorganization Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 9, *An Act to Repeal the Crown Building Corporation Act*, Bill No. 9, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: Minister.

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Artificial Intelligence, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 9, *An Act to Repeal the Crown Building Corporation Act*, read a second time.

Speaker: Minister.

[3:15 p.m.]

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Housing and Communities, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'd like to ask the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere to continue chairing the Committee of the Whole House.

[S. Dillon 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 Repeal the Crown Building Corporation Act*.

Promoter, do you have a stranger you'd like to bring onto the floor?

Hon. S. MacEwen: I do.

Chair: Shall it be granted? Granted.

Please state your name and title for Hansard.

Wendy MacDonald: Wendy MacDonald, director of finance and corporate services for the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Chair: Thank you.

Promoter, do you have an opening statement?

Hon. S. MacEwen: I don't.

Chair: Okay. Is it the pleasure of the committee to have the bill be read clause by clause, section by section, or open for general questions?

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Just before we carry the bill, I guess I'm just wondering if we can get an explanation of what the bill is doing.

Wendy MacDonald: This bill is to repeal the *Crown Building Corporation Act*. The Crown Building Corporation held the Shaw and Sullivan buildings for government.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Wendy, for that. Was there a reason for this?

Wendy MacDonald: This is a recommendation of the Auditor General's office. The corporation has been inactive for approximately 12-15 years, so we're just running it up as according to the Auditor General.

M. MacFarlane: Okay, thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Hon. S. MacEwen: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Repeal the Crown Building Corporation Act*.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. S. MacEwen: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. S. MacEwen: Madam Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

[Hon. B. Trivers in the chair]

S. Dillon: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Repeal the Crown Building Corporation Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability, that the 22nd order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 22, *An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act*, Bill No. 23, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: Minister.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 23, *An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act*, read a second time.

Speaker: Minister.

[3:20 p.m.]

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'd like to call upon the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

[S. Dillon 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 Income Tax Act*.

Promoter, do you have a stranger you'd like to bring onto the floor?

Hon. J. Burridge: Yes, please.

Chair: Shall it be granted? Granted.

Please state your name and title for Hansard.

Nigel Burns: Nigel Burns, director with the Department of Finance and Affordability.

Chair: Thank you.

Promoter, do you have an opening statement?

Hon. J. Burridge: No, I'm good. We can just get into it.

Chair: Okay. Now, is it the pleasure of the committee to have the bill be read clause by clause, section by section, or general questions?

Some Hon. Members: General questions.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair. Thanks, Nigel, for coming in to discuss this bill with us.

I guess I'm wondering if you could summarize or explain what it is that this bill intends to do.

Nigel Burns: The bill implements the changes that were announced in budget 2026.

The first part of the bill implements an additional income tax bracket starting at \$200,000 at an additional one percentage point, for 20 percent in total.

The next part of the bill is going to refocus the young child tax credit for reinvestments in the PEI child benefit to target that from a non-refundable credit to a refundable credit so low-income families can get the cash benefit.

The last part of the bill is to implement the new Island essentials benefit.

M. MacFarlane: Thanks, Nigel, for that.

Maybe starting at the top, the \$200,000 and above – what's in place presently for taxable income that exceeds \$200,000? Is it creating a new bracket? Did I hear that correctly?

Nigel Burns: The existing bracket covering that income range is taxed at 19 percent, and it will now start at 20 percent; so, an additional percentage point.

Hon. J. Burridge: I think before, it was \$142,000. That was the last....

Nigel Burns: Now, the 19 percent rate will start at that threshold, go to \$200,000 at 19 percent,

and then from \$200,000 and above, it'll be 20 percent.

M. MacFarlane: It's interesting. I don't know how often we create brand-new tax brackets like this. I know we often will, I think, amend within the brackets as existing, but when we do something like this, what's the consultation procedure for something like this that makes this change and adds the 1 percent?

[3:25 p.m.]

Nigel Burns: The important announcement is the budget announcement to announce the fiscal plans of government and the change that will be coming. For the administration of the tax, Canada Revenue Agency administers the PEI personal income tax as well as the corporate income tax, and we've provided them notice and will be adjusting payroll withholding tables come July for the taxation year.

M. MacFarlane: I note in the bill that it has that the sections 1 to 6 are deemed to have come into force on January 1, 2026. That's obviously to catch the full tax year on the new bracket and the new 20 percent rate. There is no issue in this bill going forward and retroactively coming into force to catch that. Is that normal?

Nigel Burns: Yes.

Chair: Seems like there's a lot of interest; I'll put you back on the list.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hi Nigel. I'm just wondering if you can explain the difference between the sales tax credit that's being deleted and the Island essentials benefit.

Nigel Burns: Sure. Currently, the PEI sales tax credit – it's going to be renamed, and the amounts are going to be increased so that there's a greater benefit paid to Islanders.

C. Simpson: That's great to hear; it's better for Islanders.

The threshold between \$145,000 to \$200,000 and that tax bracket going up by 1 percent at \$200,000 – are there other tax brackets that are also changing, or is that the only change? That's the only change, minister.

Okay, thank you. I'm good.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you very much.

How much anticipated revenue will the Province get from this change – the 1 percent?

Hon. J. Burridge: \$4.4 million.

G. McNeilly: When you're looking at people over \$200,000, I think about a lot of doctors and a lot of different professions that we're having trouble attracting, and we need them here. How will you take that into consideration when we can't get doctors to come on a regular basis and now we're increasing their tax bracket by quite a bit?

Hon. J. Burridge: The way it works – I don't know; you might understand this, you may not – they get the benefit of all the other tax rates all the way up. It's only the income over \$200,000 that that's going to apply to. We also did a jurisdictional scan to see if we were in line with neighbouring provinces – New Brunswick and Nova Scotia; Nigel can speak in detail on this. What we're proposing here is in line with our neighbouring provinces.

G. McNeilly: But we had a competitive advantage and it's not there anymore. We're losing doctors and professionals to potentially Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. As we heard, there's a doctor in Summerside that's going to....

Are we losing? Did you take that into consideration? I'm just thinking about doctors in particular; we're having an immense amount of problems getting doctors and recruiting.

Chair: Do you have a question, member?

G. McNeilly: How will this help?

Hon. J. Burridge: I would say if you look at all the other investments that we're making as a government into creating the team-based care environment that they're looking for; the physicians agreement just gave them huge salary bumps up to, I think, a \$325,000 base salary for a family doc. There are a lot of investments that are happening on the other side, I think, to encourage them, even the medical school – another huge investment, but it seems to be an

attraction and a recruitment tool for doctors to come here.

There's been a number of investments on that front for attraction of doctors.

G. McNeilly: This goes up 1 percent. There were some questions about when it was going to be put in place. When did you start talking about this? How did you come to the number, 1 percent? Where did you land on that? Was it to get us in line with Nova Scotia and New Brunswick?

Hon. J. Burrige: I think the jurisdictional scan did play a role in the decision making, absolutely, yeah.

[3:30 p.m.]

G. McNeilly: Can you share the jurisdictional scan with us and the information back or any information that you had along the way?

Hon. J. Burrige: Nigel will be able to give you a little more detail on that.

Nigel Burns: We can have a table prepared that shows the information you're looking for.

G. McNeilly: Perfect.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I'll carry on on the 1 percent increase in this new tax bracket. I see in the budget books, in the estimates that we've been given, on page 17, that the expected increase in personal income tax is almost exactly \$60 million. I think you mentioned that this new tax bracket is going to bring in \$4.4 million. The bulk of that income tax increase, the revenue that we're getting, is from other tax brackets.

I'm wondering if you can give us a breakdown of where that tax burden is going to land.

Nigel Burns: I think we can provide some detail on the distribution of how the tax is paid across Islanders by income range, perhaps. I think we can assemble something, if you're wondering the distribution of where it's paid.

P. Bevan-Baker: I do greatly appreciate that this is obviously a progressive part of a taxation

system; I do appreciate that. Clearly, there would be less people in the \$200,000 and above tax bracket than there would be in the \$35,000-\$50,000 tax bracket, so I do understand that it's likely that it's a bell curve, but I appreciate your willingness to come back with that Nigel. Thank you.

You mentioned that the sales tax credit is being renamed as the Island essentials benefit. Did I catch that correctly?

Nigel Burns: Correct.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay. Can you tell us if there's any difference in the mechanism by which a sales tax credit is distributed to Islanders and the Island essentials benefit?

Nigel Burns: The new name for the credit – now Island essentials benefit – leverages the same delivery mechanism. The sales tax credit was delivered quarterly by Canada Revenue Agency, bundled with the federal GST/HST credits. It was delivered there; very efficient, very high degree of direct deposit delivery.

This will leverage that, now with higher amounts. In the previous case, there's no application required, just that you filed your income taxes. The application is automatic.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks for that explanation, Nigel.

Am I, from that, to understand that previously, it was managed and overseen at a federal level but now, because I know changes have been made provincially, are we able to figure this out ourselves and take over the management of such a distribution of money?

Nigel Burns: There's no change in the delivery mechanism. CRA will continue to deliver this benefit, the same as previous, now continuing under a new name and higher amounts going to many more Islanders.

P. Bevan-Baker: Could you give us some details on how much the difference is between the sales tax credit and the Island essentials benefit for Island families?

[3:35 p.m.]

Nigel Burns: The base amount is going up by \$200. For single individuals, they'll be receiving \$310. For couples and single parents, they will

receive \$365. Those household (Indistinct) types will receive the same amount all the way up to an income of \$95,000. Above that, it will start to phase out by 1 percent of income until you reach a minimum benefit amount of \$175. For couples, that would be at about \$114,000. So, if you're making, say, \$80,000 as a couple, you'll get the \$365. If you are making, say, the \$120,000, you'll be now eligible for the minimum \$175.

Hon. J. Burridge: I think the key here is that before, that zero to \$60,000 – they were getting \$110 or \$165 already, and they're getting a \$200 bump now. The household incomes between \$60,000 and \$95,000 before now were getting nothing, and now they're getting \$310 or \$365 delivered to them through CRA. Like you would know, the GST cheques – that was only delivered to zero to \$60K at that \$110-\$165. So, they're both getting bumped up \$200, and then between – the real winners here are the working middle class, \$60K-\$95K, who would have received nothing before; they are getting that full benefit of \$310 for single, \$365 for a couple.

P. Bevan-Baker: This is a really interesting and important discussion, I think. Certainly, it was described in your address that this would be a brand-new benefit, but as I understand it, the way you've just described it is that those who receive the base sales tax credit, their benefit from the Island essentials is only going to be \$165 per household?

Hon. J. Burridge: No.

P. Bevan-Baker: The difference between what they got before and what they get now is only \$165 per year for the lower income tax brackets, is that not correct?

Hon. J. Burridge: \$200. Each of them is getting a \$200 bump.

P. Bevan-Baker: Sorry, too many numbers and contradictions here. Previously, the sales tax credit gave a base amount of \$200, is that correct? No?

Hon. J. Burridge: For a single, they got \$110. Nigel, correct me if I'm wrong.

Nigel Burns: Yeah.

Hon. J. Burridge: For a single individual, they would have got a \$110 payment over the year. A couple household income would have \$165 –

under \$60K. They're both now getting a \$200 bump to get to that max of \$310 or \$365.

P. Bevan-Baker: I do appreciate this because I'm trying to work my way through all of these categories and changes.

So, again, the lower-income Islanders will not be receiving an extra \$310 or \$365; they will be receiving \$200. The middle-income Islanders will be getting the full amount of \$310 or \$365.

Okay, that's less progressive than I imagined.

Thank you, Chair, for giving me time to figure that out.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

We've talked about the additional revenue coming from the 1 percent increase on the income at \$200,000 and above. Do we have a number on the cost of the move from the sales tax credit to the Island essential benefit for the cost to deploy that benefit? How much is it going to cost?

Nigel Burns: \$26 million.

M. MacFarlane: So, is that taking into account what was distributed under the sales tax credit before? Is that a net or a gross cost?

Nigel Burns: That's the total.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. So, that's the total cost, not considering what we were disbursing before under the sales tax credit as it previously existed. Do we know how much that was? I'm trying to get how much the increase is from the previous sales tax credit to the new Island essentials benefit.

Hon. J. Burridge: I believe the net new investment into this – new money into this – is \$10 million.

M. MacFarlane: Okay, thank you for that.

[3:40 p.m.]

I'm just working through the amendments to subsection 36.3(7). We're changing 2 percent and substituting 1 percent. We're deleting \$50,000 and substituting \$95,000. That's all to

do with the movement from the sales tax credit to the Island essentials benefit?

Nigel Burns: Correct.

M. MacFarlane: Could you explain the practical implication of these amendments?

Nigel Burns: Sure. Currently under the sales tax credit, the amount starts to phase out at \$50,000 – at 2 percent of income exceeding \$50,000. The phase-out point is going from \$50,000 to \$95,000, and the rate of phase-out is being reduced to 1 percent.

M. MacFarlane: I know this is probably in the release or mentioned before, minister, but at what point is it phased out by way of income threshold – \$95,000?

Nigel Burns: Now that there's a minimum, it will go to the minimum. Regardless of income, people will be eligible to receive at least the minimum.

Hon. J. Burridge: Which is \$175 a month.

M. MacFarlane: And then when we go to the reference to not less than \$43.75, and then we see in the next subsection \$43.76. I guess that's just rounding?

Nigel Burns: That part of the act makes the – individuals who are eligible for the minimum payment will receive it in a lump sum. Given that this is a quarterly calculation because that's how it's delivered, \$43.75 is the quarterly amount of the minimum. If you're eligible for the \$43.75, it will be paid out in a lump sum. This is leveraging existing roles of kind of smaller, lump-sum amounts for GST and HST credits that are currently in place.

M. MacFarlane: I guess my last question is just on the coming-into-force date of July 1st. Is there much that needs to get done before July 1st to get this deployed and rolled out to Islanders?

Nigel Burns: July 1st is an important date for benefits. That's the beginning of the benefit year – July to June. The important part is that the bill become law – receive royal assent – before that.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Chair.

When you're talking about this – I appreciate the conversation, and obviously I'll ask this question because it probably took a lot to come to this phase. I'm just going to ask some questions about the phase-out. You talked about \$95,000. There are a lot of people who are living in difficult means, and what I see is the phase-out increased on the top end of things, which means that....

My question is: Did we consider doing it the other way and providing more to the people making less money, and looking at it that way?

Hon. J. Burridge: The consideration was a lot of those households under the – everyone gets that max benefit. There was a ceiling and a floor put in this benefit – the floor being \$175; the ceiling being \$365 for a couple. Those things are both built in.

Every household from zero to \$95K is getting the ceiling. Every household on the Island is getting the \$175. That's what we decided was the average. That's what the average rebate was, so we said let's give everybody that – that's the floor – and then every household from zero to \$95,000 would get that ceiling of \$310 or \$365.

[3:45 p.m.]

G. McNeilly: You're talking about ceilings. Some people in PEI don't have ceilings, even in their houses. They can't afford what we need because – I understand what you're doing with this, but I'm saying: Why were those numbers chosen, at \$175, when we're losing more people in the bottom half of what's happening with numbers and what's happening across the province? They can't afford to live. Why was a ceiling at \$175 chosen, and not something quite a bit less? Because then you could have given more money to people that need it the most.

Hon. J. Burridge: This is going to be a significant boost to households in PEI. This is \$10 million of new investment into these households.

G. McNeilly: Well, I'm just understanding, when you have the opportunity.... Minister, you're the Minister of Affordability. You didn't have to stop where you did. You could have given people a lot more money.

[Interjection]

G. McNeilly: Well, you could have. You could have given the people that need it, let's say, \$400, and the people that might not need it so much, a little bit less than that.

Is there anything that we can do to look at how this thing is divided so that we make sure that we get people out of poverty? That should be our number one focus on Prince Edward Island, I do believe.

Chair: Is that your question?

G. McNeilly: You bet.

Chair: Do you want to phrase that again...

G. McNeilly: No.

Chair: ...into a question? I didn't hear a question.

G. McNeilly: Okay. Will you reconsider, minister, the \$175 ceiling or bottom so that we can give people – Islanders that need it the most, that are struggling to buy a carton of milk on Prince Edward Island – more money because they need it more than the people at the very top of this? That's my question.

Hon. J. Burridge: Out of one side of your mouth, you're saying cut the spending...

G. McNeilly: No, I didn't say that.

Hon. J. Burridge: ...and then, out of the other side of your mouth, you're saying add more.

We're up against fiscal capacity here. This is \$10 million of new money put on top of what was already going to households. This is a huge boost for households to go and spend however they see fit. If they want to put it towards housing, if they want to put it towards food, if they want to put it towards gas, it's money in their pockets that they can now spend on what they need.

Add that to protected \$10-a-day child care. Add that to the PEI essentials child benefit of 50 more dollars a child in every household that we put in this year. Add that to all the other affordability measures – transit and all of these other things – that come into play. I think it was \$321 million in this budget for affordability measures on PEI.

G. McNeilly: One of the big things that you've added is the amount of their electricity bills that are going to go up here pretty soon across the Island. That was taken off, and this was put in, and that's going to disproportionately affect people that need it the most. They're going to be facing this instantly.

Chair: Do you have a question?

G. McNeilly: If we want to debate, the \$10-a-day daycare – that's a federal program.

Hon. J. Burridge: We pay \$80 million.

G. McNeilly: I know how much you pay for it, but it's a shared expense, so let's talk about –

Chair: Member, do you have a question?

G. McNeilly: I do have a question.

Chair: Okay, well, let's get to it.

G. McNeilly: All I'm saying is that for \$10 million, you could have distributed that money more efficiently to help lower-income people on Prince Edward Island.

Will you consider adding to this so the people can get more money in their pockets so they can afford the essentials? That's the name of this, and they can't afford the essentials. They can't even afford it with this, minister. Will you make that change?

Hon. J. Burridge: The way it was set up before in the sales rebate actually was unfair. The people in the higher-income brackets heating hot tubs were actually getting more benefit out of that than your lower-income households. This actually takes from there and redistributes the refunds into those lower-income households. That's essentially what this does.

G. McNeilly: I'm glad to hear that. And I mean, there are some –

[Interjections]

G. McNeilly: Minister of Social Development, don't come at me and say, "Come on."

Chair: You have the floor, hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

G. McNeilly: This is your file. These are your –

Chair: Hon. Member from Charlottetown-West
Royalty, you have the floor...

G. McNeilly: Yes, I do, and I don't want to hear
—

Chair: So, ask your question to the table.

G. McNeilly: Well, I don't want to hear, "Come
on," from the Minister of Social Development
when a lot of her clients — and I've been through
this — are having trouble...

Chair: You have the floor. Ask your question.

G. McNeilly: ...feeding themselves.

[3:50 p.m.]

My question is: singles at \$310, and couples at
\$365. I know. I understand. I'm following the
increments. So, couples — if there's two people,
they're only getting \$365. If they're singles,
they're getting \$310. Is there a discrepancy
there? Are you comfortable with that, or should
couples get more? They have more expenses.

Hon. J. Burridge: Couples are getting more.
They're getting \$365. The other thing that I'll
add is before, that rebate was going to each
household. Now, it's everyone who files taxes,
is 19 years of age, and is a Canadian citizen. So,
potentially, before, if you had three roommates
sitting in a house — say you have three 25-year-
olds in a house — they would have gotten a
rebate on their power bill for that one house.
Now, each of those, if they file their taxes
independently, are a Canadian citizen, and 19
years of age, they are each getting \$300.

G. McNeilly: The last thing I wanted to say is
that in a three-bedroom house, there are six
people living in there before they can't afford
the house right now. You know it. There's more
than three people in there because it's so
expensive to live in Prince Edward Island, and
this bill doesn't help them enough.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

It's become a pretty heated discussion here, and
I can understand that because this was the
centrepiece — in fact, you renamed your
department to include affordability, and this is

the centrepiece that you're claiming is going to
be the affordability solution for Islanders.

What I hear is that there's 10 million extra
dollars going into this. How much was it costing
the government to subsidize Maritime Electric
bills — \$10 million.

Hon. J. Burridge: Well, I think it was actually
— well, it might be around there, but I think it
might have been more than that. Maybe coming
into this year, it might have been more.

P. Bevan-Baker: So, if we add up the previous
sales tax credit plus the money that Islanders
were getting from their electricity rebate, there is
no extra money going forward. In fact, the
lower-income Islanders are no better off in this.

[Interjections]

P. Bevan-Baker: We can argue about cottages;
we can argue whether hot tubs are a problem...

Chair: Do you have a question?

P. Bevan-Baker: ...but the reality is there is no
extra money going to Islanders, particularly the
lowest-income Islanders, and this is very —

Chair: Is that your question?

P. Bevan-Baker: It's disgraceful.

Hon. J. Burridge: That's absolutely wrong and
incorrect.

An Hon. Member: Do the math.

P. Bevan-Baker: I did; take away \$10 million,
add \$10 million. It's the same. It's a zero-sum
game.

Hon. J. Burridge: It's absolutely not. Your
math is wrong, absolutely; your math is wrong.

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

Hon. R. Croucher: My question is: Can you re-
explain that to the Member from New Haven-
Rocky Point in terms that he can understand?

Hon. J. Burridge: They obviously don't listen
to me, so I'll let Nigel take a crack.

Nigel Burns: The electrical rebate was
approximately \$10 million. This is an additional

\$10 million. It's replacing the \$10 million plus adding \$10 million.

P. Bevan-Baker: Chair, that's not how it was explained ten minutes ago.

Chair: Hold on, hold on. Are you asking to speak?

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: As it was explained, unless I misheard or misinterpreted – it's entirely possible; we all make mistakes – the additional money put into this Island essentials benefit compared to the sales tax credit was \$10 million. That's what I heard from the floor. Is that not correct?

Hon. J. Burridge: The full bucket that we're putting into this program is \$26 million.

P. Bevan-Baker: Does that demonstrate a \$10 million increase over the sales tax credit money that was going out already anyway?

Hon. J. Burridge: Yes.

P. Bevan-Baker: Right. My math is not incorrect.

Hon. J. Burridge: No, it is. The rebate was – I don't know the exact number on this.

Nigel Burns: It was about \$7 million.

Hon. J. Burridge: I think it was more than that. I think it was \$11 million-ish. Then, we added \$10 million net new money into this pot.

[3:55 p.m.]

My only gap that I have to get back to you on is where that difference is on the \$5 million, where that's coming from. But the Maritime Electric rebate was \$10 million or \$11 million. Add in \$10 million of new money. My only gap is that other \$5 million and where that's coming from, which I will get to you. But there's \$10 million of new money here.

P. Bevan-Baker: I'm thoroughly confused, Chair, so I'm just going to.... I will take this away and try and make sense of it.

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Hon. J. Burridge: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

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

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

[Hon. B. Trivers in the chair]

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Land and Environment, that the 21st order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 21, *An Act to Amend the Real Property Tax Act*, Bill No. 24, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: Minister.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Real Property Tax Act*, Bill No. 24, read a second time.

Speaker: Minister.

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Land and Environment, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

[S. Dillon in the chair]

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

Promoter, do you have a stranger you'd like to bring onto the floor?

Hon. J. Burridge: Yes, I do.

Chair: Shall it be granted? Granted.

Please state your name and title for Hansard.

Ryan Pineau: Ryan Pineau. I'm the provincial tax commissioner.

Chair: Thank you.

Promoter, do you have an opening statement?

Hon. J. Burridge: No, I'm good.

Chair: Is it the pleasure of the committee to read the bill clause by clause, section by section, or open for general questions? General questions.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thanks. Thanks, Ryan, for coming in.

I may have missed it. This hasn't been on the floor for debate?

Ryan Pineau: No.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. Could you give us a bit of a review?

[4:00 p.m.]

Ryan Pineau: Sure. We're making some amendments to the *Real Property Tax Act* in a couple of different areas; one, the non-commercial tax rate will increase from \$1.50 to \$1.70, but at the same time, the non-commercial tax credit – what's commonly referred to as the provincial tax credit – will increase from 50 cents to 70 cents. So, the net tax rate for Islanders remains at \$1, but it results in a 20-cent increase for non-residents of PEI.

We're also introducing a new tax credit for non-resident-owned, multi-unit residential dwellings – non-resident-owned apartment buildings – of 20 cents so that for non-resident-owned apartment buildings, the tax rate doesn't increase along with that other tax rate increase, the reason being that the rent for 2026 through IRAC has already been set, not reflective of these tax rate increases. They wouldn't be able to recover them, so that credit comes into place to alleviate the increase on those properties.

Chair: Thank you, stranger.

It is now four o'clock. We will be reporting progress so that we can switch over to opposition time.

Hon. J. Burridge: Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

[Hon. B. Trivers in the chair]

S. Dillon: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Real Property Tax Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Motions Other Than Government

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

G. McNeilly: At this time, I call Motion No. 36 to the floor.

Deputy Clerk: Motion No. 36: Holding government accountable.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, the following motion:

WHEREAS transparency and accountability are fundamental to good governance and maintaining public trust;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this House calls on the Government of Prince Edward Island to improve transparency by providing timely and accurate information to Islanders on major financial decisions, contracts, and government spending.

Speaker: I'd like to call upon the mover to open debate.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'm pleased to rise on this motion, which is "Holding government accountable." This motion is asking for something that's really very basic, something that's very simple, and something that should be fundamental for all of us elected officials in this room.

This motion calls for transparency. It calls for timely information, accurate information, and public information, and information on major decisions, on contracts, on decisions – anything that should be controversial – that really should not be that difficult to do. It should not be threatening to any government that actually believes in accountability.

We have a government that likes to stand all the time and say that they are transparent and that they are accountable but have yet to prove that. This government has shown over and over again that it doesn't like transparency when transparency becomes inconvenient for them.

[4:05 p.m.]

It doesn't mind making announcements, it doesn't mind headlines, and it doesn't mind slogans. We've seen that time and time again where they've come out with – even in this session, whether it's through Question Period or ministerial statements, even in opening remarks where they'll make these announcements, but they don't follow through. That is a trend with this government; they love to make the

announcements and no follow-through. That is not being very accountable to Islanders who believe that this government will follow through and do what they say.

They don't mind going out and standing in front of the cameras again and making these announcements, but what this government does mind is scrutiny. We see that time and time again.

What it does mind is the public getting to see the full picture. Again, they want to make that headline. They want that photo op. They want to get on the news and say they're doing a great job. They pat each other on the back, pound the table in here whenever they're making an announcement, but the public doesn't see the full picture.

That's exactly why this motion that was brought to the floor today matters, because Islanders have spent the last year – really, the last 12 to 16 months – watching a government that has lacked leadership, lacked political will, and lacked the courage to make difficult decisions in the public interest.

We've seen most of last year where we had a part-time Premier who was more interested in his own leadership campaign than he was in actually running the province and trying to solve the problems that Islanders are facing.

We see it every day. We hear it every day with health care. Timely access to primary health care is still a huge issue right across this province – people waiting out in the cold to get into walk-in clinics, people who do not have a family physician and were promised to have a family physician, promised by this government to have a patient registry that was down to zero. Today, there has been no movement on that other than trending back up again.

They don't mind standing in the House and saying we have seven new physicians coming, but they're not telling us two things: the full-time equivalency of them, plus how many physicians have actually left in the last month, two months, three months.

So, that's what's wrong. They're not being transparent. They're not giving Islanders the full picture of what's happening. They'll say that they're doing well, that Islanders are doing well. Islanders don't feel well. They know that they're struggling.

Everyone in this room, I'm sure, gets calls from our constituents about access to health care. I know I certainly do up in the west, for sure, and I do get emails from other parts of the Island where people are discouraged. They're frustrated with the system. They are scared, and they have a right to be scared. There are many individuals in Prince Edward Island that do not have a family doctor, who have complex medical needs, and they feel like they're not being heard by this government.

They're at home. They're worried about their health care, or the health care of a loved one in their family. Islanders don't deserve that, and they don't deserve a government that's going to stand up and say, "We're fixing this. We have this fixed. We have more doctors, more nurses coming into the province, working, signed up." But they're not giving us the full picture.

They're not telling us the nurses – what the FTEs are, the full-time equivalency on them. They're offering nurses jobs, yes, but they're offering them part-time jobs. That's not sustainable, especially for a nurse who's just graduated who has a \$60,000 to \$70,000 bill for education and who wants to pay that off and also has to try to find a place to live and a vehicle to get to and from work, along with the other daily basic expenses. They need to have more than just a part-time job.

So, when they add ten new nurses or 20 new nurses to things, what is the FTE of the nurses? That's what they're not telling Islanders. Again, that's not transparency – definitely not transparency. This government needs to change the way they communicate with Islanders. Islanders deserve to have better communication from this government.

[4:10 p.m.]

I talked about lacking leadership and misplaced priorities over the past – well, over the past seven years, but in particular, over the last 12 to 16 months. We've really seen that, and now we're seeing a budget that has been tabled here recently. I think it's two weeks ago now it's been tabled. We have yet to see it hit the floor for debate so that Islanders can really find out what changes this government has made, what cuts this government has made, and what increases this government has made in whatever departments. But they don't have that opportunity to find that out yet because this government's misplaced priorities are bringing

bill to the floor right now that could wait until after the budget was debated; instead, they chose to delay.

They've always used excuses over the past several years that we need to get in early; we need to change the time that we go into the Legislature so that by April 1st, the start of the fiscal year, the NGOs and all these other organizations and departments that rely on government funding have it in time.

Here we are in, what, the third week? We're going in to the fourth week of this fiscal, and still do not have the budget on the floor of the House to be debated. I'm assuming when it does finally hit the floor – we're going to be into June by the time that budget is completely debated. Is that fair to Islanders? No. Is that this government being transparent to Islanders? Absolutely not. Islanders know the difference. The session was prorogued so that this new – old new – government could prepare a budget to present to Islanders. That was eight weeks ago – eight weeks ago – and we have still to debate that budget on the floor of this House.

What we've seen with this government is a government that looks inward instead of outward. We've seen that time and time again, those concerns. We talked about them today again. It seems to be this government will bend, break, or amend any rule or any law to satisfy their own individual needs. That's not a government that should be putting people first – I guess I'll use one of their slogans from one of the campaigns of the past. That's not putting people first; that's putting themselves first, and Islanders see this.

Islanders are telling us that this is a government, obviously, that's failed Islanders, that's tone deaf, and that is just concerned about their own needs. It all goes back to, again, 16 months ago, when we had a part-time Premier who was in, out, in, out, and then he was in – and spent all of that time devoted to his leadership campaign and not to the needs of Islanders.

Government should not be preoccupied with their own problems. They should be interested in helping Islanders with the problems that their facing today with housing, the cost of living, and with health care – in particular, access to primary health care.

A government too often that is focused on protecting itself and protecting their friends and

cleaning up its own messes while Islanders deal with long health care waits, high rents, expensive groceries, and rising bills – that is unfair to each and every Islander living here on Prince Edward Island. That is the truth. The focus needs to be on Islanders and the issues that they face on a day-to-day basis. Why is that the truth? It's because we do hear this. We hear it on a day-to-day basis from Islanders right across this province.

Let me start with health care because nowhere has the need of real transparency been clearer. Islanders watched Health PEI – the travel cost scandal – unfold. They watched the public outrage and they watched the questions pile up.

[4:15 p.m.]

They also watched the confidence collapse. They watched the confidence collapse in this government because what did this government do? They showed the CEO to the door against the rules of the Legislature and against the letter of her contract.

We know that real change in the health care system starts on the front lines and not on the top offices here on Prince Edward Island. I've said it and I'll say it again: this government does not listen to the frontline workers who live with these issues on a day-to-day basis. They are the ones who get the brunt of the public frustration, not someone who's sitting behind a desk in Charlottetown – and not, obviously, anybody on that side of the House because there's absolutely nothing being done to solve these problems or to address any of the issues that Islanders are facing.

Islanders were left with a clear impression that this government was more interested in managing optics than answering the underlying questions. Again, I continue to say that they will stand time and time again and try to defend decisions that they make that generally help themselves and not help Islanders. Islanders will not forget that. We all hear it. Everyone in this House hears it.

Islanders saw that CEO shown to the door only after a deadline that tied to repayment of those travel costs had come and gone. Again, more moneys paid out from hardworking taxpayers of Prince Edward Island for this mismanagement of this government – I was going to say financial, but right across the board, this government has no accountability. All they seem to do is damage

control. They continue to wait until the political heat becomes too much, and then try to move on as if the public hadn't noticed.

There are multiple issues that have surfaced over the past several weeks in here, and much of it was basically going to be swept underneath the rug. If it wasn't – thank God – for the media or for the opposition bringing light to these issues, they would still be underneath that rug somewhere. This government would have continued to move forward without anyone knowing any better.

But Islanders did notice because it was brought to their attention. They noticed this government's priorities are misplaced. They live in a province that shows this government has misplaced priorities on a day-to-day basis with the cost of living, the challenges with housing, and of course I've got to go back to health care because it is probably the number one issue I'm hearing at the door.

The Minister of Health is over there saying you're asking zero – there are questions asked every day here on health. The problem is they're not getting any answers. Islanders don't get answers, and they notice that. What they get is rhetoric. When they get caught up against the ropes, they'll point the finger at someone else, and they have a tendency to do that quite often. Islanders noticed that while they were being told to tighten their belts, senior officials were getting treatment ordinary Islanders could never even dream of.

That all happened underneath this government's watch. They noticed that when ordinary Islanders fall behind, government lectures about restraint at that time, but when insiders run up the costs, government suddenly gets very patient, very careful, and very quiet. That's a double standard.

Then there is the – well, I kind of alluded to it a little bit a while ago. There was a \$100,000 payout scandal. It was a scandal that this government created on their own. It was a secretive response that only served to make this government's ties to the scandal seem even greyer.

[4:20 p.m.]

The timeline of this scandal is curious at best. The inconsistent messaging from this government just enhances Islanders' skepticism

about the democratic process and systems in this province. Unfortunately for Islanders, it's a theme with this government. They've thrown out the window every democratic principle that has governed this House to suit their own political needs.

This \$100,000 secret payout, this scandal, continues to cast a shadow over this place, and that's unfortunate. The details offered by this government raise more questions than they do answers. The Premier's own statement says that the matter involved a stop work order at the proposed Summerside golf club, and it had concerns that proper approvals had not been given for work in the wetland area, and a belief by the developer that a donation to a non-profit organization had been made in exchange for ministerial approval. As we all know, this was referred to the RCMP and now is an open investigation with the RCMP.

It was not by the Premier or the Attorney General; it was hardworking public servants. That's important because it wasn't leadership. Leadership starts at the top, and that has been missing with this government, especially over the past 16 months.

It was reported that the non-profit that received the payout was led by the campaign manager for the former Minister of Environment. Now, think about that. Think about that. Think about what Islanders are thinking when they hear that. It's unbelievable. And then when they find out the addresses – the ties of all these addresses and who that goes back to, it doesn't make Islanders wonder anymore; they actually believe that this government has put themselves first, and they will do anything to bend, to break, and to amend any rule to serve themselves. In this particular case, it was a wetland permit and a developer and a secret six-figure payout with a former campaign manager of the minister who made that supposed deal.

In response to this scandal, the Premier hired, in his own words, "a trusted friend" for outside legal counsel. Can you imagine? A trusted friend. We talked about who this trusted friend was in this House. He was part of the PC executive. A minister was removed from Cabinet only after being pressed by local media – that was only out of the Cabinet – and then the next day, removed from caucus, only after pressure by the public. Unbelievable.

He was suspended from caucus days after he should have been gone, but no, this government and this Premier thought they could sweep it underneath the rug like they have done with everything else.

So, I'm very happy that the RCMP were alerted, and just yesterday learning that the RCMP have now changed it to an open investigation. How did we find that out, again? We didn't find that out by this government, no; we found it out by media yet again, not by this government. Where is the transparency? I definitely don't see any transparency in any of this.

On three different occasions, this government shut down debate on this very serious issue. We as opposition have a role to play in this House, and that's to hold government accountable for their actions and for their decisions, or lack thereof. We've tried to debate in this House, but this government – because they have a majority – would instantaneously stop that and shut it down. Why? Because they don't want Islanders to know the truth.

But Islanders aren't naïve. Islanders know the truth. They can read between the lines. They know what this government is hiding, and they know why this government doesn't want to discuss any ways for making our democracy here any stronger. That is exactly what the problem is. Government members can stand up and talk about trust and accountability, but when Islanders look at what has actually happened, they see insiders, special treatments, and a government that only acts when the scandal becomes too big to ignore.

[4:25 p.m.]

Who knows what's next? This issue on its own, this issue alone, should alarm Islanders. But what's been happening at the very same time is this government is trying to change the conflict of interest rules that protect the interests of Islanders. The priorities of this government are so out of touch.

Now, during Question Period today I talked about the conflict – and it's not pointed at one individual and their inability or abilities, because this individual, I do have confidence in his abilities to be a good MLA. He's proven that. I have confidence in his ability to be a minister, absolutely. But he has a choice to make. He can't do two jobs. Islanders deserve to have a full-time minister. That's a privilege that comes

with the responsibility of being a minister. There's an expectation from Islanders that it's a full-time job, and they deserve nothing less than that.

There are huge privileges to being a minister of the Crown and to receive privileged information. I talked briefly about that today, and there's a lot more to that because there are competing interests in fishing and ministerial duties. There is no other jurisdiction in Canada that a minister can run a business – nowhere – and there's a reason why that is there.

A minister can sit at the Executive Council table and have access to confidential information about maybe (Indistinct) we're talking fisheries; let's talk about stock levels. We can talk about market risks or we can talk about export changes. They have access to that information when Islanders who are in the same industry are not privy to that same information, and that is an unfair advantage. That kind of insight could basically directly impact decisions like when to sell a licence or when to adjust operations, and that is an unfair advantage.

That's why the *Conflict of Interest Act* is there. It's to prevent that and to make sure that everybody's on a level playing field and that the minister of whatever department – it's a full-time job; they're committed to that department and doing the best they possibly can to help Islanders in whatever way they can do it. The public needs confidence in this act.

The Premier makes it seem like fishing – he talked about fishing like it's only an eight-week job. You talk to any fisher across this Island and ask them if fishing is only an eight-week job. I'm sure they'll tell you quite different. There's trap repair, there's gear repair, there are boat repairs.... There's a lot more that goes on in a fishing home with a fisher that has a licence than what this Premier believes. He has to get outside of Brighton every now and then and maybe drive out to the rural parts of Prince Edward Island, and get on a wharf, and understand the fishing industry here on Prince Edward Island.

To think that this Premier jeopardized the lobster industry on Prince Edward Island makes me very, very angry. That's what he did when he prioritized going to Ottawa to try to advocate to change the owner-operator rule that the fishermen want in place to save their industry. That could have a huge impact here on Prince Edward Island if that was opened – if the

requirement wasn't there that the owner needs to be operating in that boat.

[4:30 p.m.]

What it does is it's a safeguard; it keeps it from having a corporate takeover. I know there are some big industries right across Prince Edward Island that could come in here pretty quickly – they have the money and they could snatch up a lot of these fishing licences and monopolize the market, and that would put an end to all of these families' – 1,250 licences on Prince Edward Island; approximately 10,000 people work in that industry. Then we start adding in the families that they all support, the communities that they all support, the organizations across Prince Edward Island that they support....

The lobster industry is the third-largest economic driver here on Prince Edward Island. In my district, 85 percent of my local economy, I'm sure, is driven by the lobster industry. It is something that I will definitely stand up for – the fishers in my area who come to me with a great deal of concern about this Premier's misplaced priorities and the lack of understanding of the fishing industry here on Prince Edward Island. He should be ashamed of himself for that.

There is information I mentioned before that ministers are given that others in the same industry are not privy to. This amendment clearly would help that one person's interest, and that is unfair. There was absolutely no consultation with the PEIFA or any fishers; absolutely no consultation done whatsoever to the industry that represents the fishers of Prince Edward Island.

If a minister holds a commercial fishing interest, they could definitely be in the position, intentionally or not, to benefit from that privileged information. I mentioned it a while ago. An example: early knowledge of declining stocks or pending changes to export markets could really influence decisions about selling the licence or adjusting the business operations ahead of the market. That's an unfair advantage, and that is why I have the huge issue with the conflict of interest amendment, the bill that was put forward to change the *Conflict of Interest Act*, because again, those are the reasons. I can't be any clearer on why.

I'm not sure, with this government, what their spin is on it because when I speak to these lobster fishers, again, they're not naïve. They

know what's going on. They know what potentially could happen here. There are privileges that come with being a minister. Some may say that there are privileges that come with also being a lobster licence holder. There are choices to be made. Many Islanders would like to have a choice between maybe a lobster fishery licence and being a minister, and they would choose one or the other.

There is nothing that has ever stopped any Islander, any fisher on this Island from putting their name forward to be a member of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island. There is nothing there to prevent that from happening. These fishers can fish their gear. They have in the past; we all know that. However, there is that rule – it's a law – that it's a conflict of interest if they sit in Cabinet and still hold that licence.

I'm just not going to go over it again because I think I made my point quite clear.

[Interjection]

Hon. H. Perry: Well, okay, I guess the member over here from Charlottetown – I'm not even sure...

G. McNeilly: Belvedere.

Hon. H. Perry: ...Belvedere wants me to repeat it again; we'll repeat it again. And why? Because she doesn't have any harbours in her area. This is what's happening. This is what I talked about a while ago about the Premier, who lives in Brighton. He doesn't have any fishers that I know of in the Brighton area. He doesn't go outside of the Brighton area other than to go to Ottawa to advocate for one of his own.

We have members of this House who would prefer to support their own, who have no understanding of the impacts that these changes could make to the industry here on Prince Edward Island, but yet they don't mind making these little comments across the floor. That's a shame because Islanders put their trust in each and every one of us in this room to look after Islanders' needs and not their own personal needs.

[4:35 p.m.]

The priorities of this government are so out of touch. They are so out of touch. A conflict of interest problem goes right to heart of this

motion because what Islanders have watched is a government willing to spend political capital and time – much time – in this Legislature trying to sort how to keep one of their own in Cabinet, a decision that was made by the Premier, knowing what the rules were but neglected that.

Again, the bending, the breaking, and amending to suit themselves. This is what this government does time and time again. Islanders will not forget that. Islanders will not forget how this government has conducted themselves and has not put the interests of Islanders first. They put the interests of their own first.

We have a budget that needs to be debated in here. We have a budget that Islanders are waiting for, to see what programs are cut. Every day we hear something new of a different program, a different cut that this government has made. We saw today that a couple had gone back; they retracted those cuts. How many more cuts are within this budget that we don't know about? They're making cuts that are just – they absolutely make no sense, but the outcry from Islanders is loud, and we're hearing it, and I know they're hearing it too, and that's why they fold like a cheap tent.

This government is prioritizing making the life of a single Cabinet minister better, rather than the collective lives of Islanders.

So, I'm going to move on because this government always seems to move quickly when it needs to help one of its own, but they don't move very quickly when Islanders need help. No, that patient registry was supposed to be down to zero two years ago – 35,000 Islanders, I'm going to say, approximately, are without a family doctor. But when it comes to this government and trying to help Islanders, suddenly things become more complicated. Suddenly things need to take more time to make sure they do it right.

And guess what? There's no money in the budget. So, what does this government do? "Well, we need to do another review." Another process and another delay. While Islanders are struggling with the cost of living, and while this budget is late, and while health care remains unstable, while businesses on Prince Edward Island need certainty, this government is spending its energy trying to solve an internal Cabinet problem of its own making.

No different than what this government did over the past 16 months when the part-time Premier last year spent all of his time on his leadership campaign and neglected the needs of Islanders. Now, who's paying for that? The Islanders. Prince Edward Islanders are paying for this government's inability to focus on their needs, and this government's inability to manage, whether it's programming or, obviously as we see right now, fiscally. They have a terrible inability to be fiscally responsible.

They're not being transparent. Those books should be on the floor of this House by now, and Islanders deserve to have opposition question this government over the decisions that they've made to try to have a better understanding of what got us in this province to the situation we're in right now. I could just repeat what I said as what has gotten us here.

Islanders deserve to hear from this government why we're in this situation and how we're going to get out of it, because right now, there's absolutely zero confidence of any Islander that this government has the desire, let alone the ability, to help Islanders alleviate the pressures that they see today.

While Islanders are struggling with the cost of living – and again, we talked about how this budget is late – and health care right across Prince Edward Island remains unstable, and I said businesses need that certainty. Not only the certainty; they need to know that this government has some stability so that these businesses can plan into the future, and they do not have that right now. They do not have that. They have a government who is on a spending spree.

[4:40 p.m.]

Why is this government continuing to put money into an NHL deal that has cost Islanders millions of dollars over the last few years, and we've seen absolutely no return on that money spent? But yet today, Islanders had to fight for a mere \$50,000 to \$100,000 to have books returned to children on Prince Edward Island. What does that say? Misplaced priorities.

This government had no issues with, again, travelling across North America, brushing shoulders with other celebrities, let's say, and eating some of the best steaks and lobster. Islanders would love to have access to a party like that but they can't afford to; they really

can't afford to. And what did Islanders get to show for this? Absolutely nothing.

What they got out of it was actually a deficit this year, again with this government, which is something that seems to be common – not seems to be common; it is common with this government – where their children and grandchildren and future generations will be paying for the mistakes that this government has made with their inability to be fiscally responsible, their inability to manage and balance the books here on Prince Edward Island. They have misplaced priorities.

I could go on and on about that because we're into, now, the third year of the second term of this government. For Islanders, we can't get to the end fast enough. We're hearing that loud and clear that they're asking for this government to.... Well, I guess it's a little bit too late right now to ask for this government to do something, but at least show them a little bit of hope, that this government has not wasted the last three years, in particular, and the last 16 months.

Islanders would like to see just a little bit of hope, a little bit of vision from this government – some optimism instead of having our students who are graduating from post-secondary saying: "What incentives are there to stay here?"

We have – I'll go back to the nurses. They're coming out of there with a huge debt. \$60,000 to \$70,000. They need the security of a full-time job and they're not getting that from this government. That is a main issue with health care on Prince Edward Island. If you went out and talked to the frontline workers on Prince Edward Island, you would hear – that would be one of their top concerns that they have – that positions are just percentages. There are very few full-time positions that are being put out.

Again, because government will brag about all of the jobs and all of the nurses that they have hired, all of the frontline health care workers. What they don't tell is the truth: what the full-time equivalency is and how many are leaving the system.

I know of frontline health care workers that have left the system to go work with CRA, to go fishing, to work in carpentry because of the situation that this government has created, which is a toxic environment within the health care system here on Prince Edward Island. These individuals went into health care with a desire to

help those in need and the most vulnerable on Prince Edward Island. They need to have the support of this government. That is lacking.

Decisions are being made by individuals who have zero understanding of what it's like on the front line. This government refuses to go out to the front line and speak to those individuals who, as I said earlier, live with these issues on a day-to-day basis. They may have even just a suggestion that might help move this system forward to help alleviate some of those pressures. Even just a little step forward is much better than what's happening, where this government is stepping backwards all the time.

We have the worst access to health care here on Prince Edward Island, and that is a shame. We are a small province of 180,000 people. There is no reason why this government could not create a made-in-PEI way to deal with the issues of health care.

[4:45 p.m.]

Create an environment that people are proud of. Create an environment where people are happy to go to work every day. That's an easy fix, but it's neglected by this government, and why? Well, they're too busy being focused on their own needs, and that's a shame because we have a lot of talented Islanders that want to provide a service to Islanders and they are so frustrated, so burnt out, that they leave the system because of that.

I keep saying this is a government that always looks inward.

They're always looking inward. Let's start, now, talking about finances. I'm sure I'll come back again to health care.

This motion calls for timely and accurate information on major financial decisions, on contracts, and on spending. On that test, it's obvious this government has failed. There was a budget that was tabled eight weeks late, and now we're into the third week of the fiscal year. That's not timely. That's not timely delivery to Islanders, and that is not accurate in any meaningful planning sense.

Islanders are told that we have to tighten our belts and cuts are coming, so Islanders are a little bit nervous. They're a little bit worried about their future, about decisions that could impact their life. Businesses need to know what

the financial situation is like on the Island so they can plan ahead. This government is neglecting to give them that information and prolonging that agony that Islanders are experiencing. This government has definitely failed on all accounts.

This is a government that likes to paint a picture, but what's happening with this picture is that it's deteriorating pretty rapidly, but it's forcing everyone else to make decisions without facts and that is not right. People should know the facts before they make any decisions, and this government's inability to be transparent, this government's inability to communicate effectively and correctly with Islanders is what's missing.

If it was something that they had to make a correction on to do with their party or themselves, it would be done rather quickly, but when it comes to dealing with an issue that Islanders are facing? No. It could take weeks. It could take months. There's spin that's been put out. There's an inability of this government to answer any questions that Islanders are asking. Many questions that we ask in this House Islanders are asking through us, and they're not getting the answers. They're not getting the answers that they ask. This government, again, has failed and has let down Islanders.

What did this government bring in this year? Well, I'll tell you what they brought in. They brought in a projected spend of \$3.89 billion, with revenues of \$3.4 billion.

G. McNeilly: That doesn't make sense.

Hon. H. Perry: Of course not, but they know how to do math, remember?

Well, their math is not adding up. We have another deficit, and this time a \$410 million deficit. And I can tell you, when the blue books come out, it's going to be more like a \$450 million deficit that this government has created because they have an ability – and they don't even have the desire to make any change or to try to help Islanders. They're having a party over there. They're having a great time spending these dollars.

[4:50 p.m.]

I can go back to a previous Liberal premier who was paying down the net debt – it was trending downward; the net debt was being paid down

because there was concern that future generations would not be held on the hook for that – who put in, year after year, a surplus, and left this government in 2019 a \$100 million surplus that they blew within six months, and they just kept on going with that.

Maybe that was a mistake, leaving them some money, because they probably thought it's endless. "We can do what we want." But I mean, after seven years, you would think that they would clue in that deficit after deficit after deficit is not helping Islanders.

We are on track this year – not we. This government is on track for a \$5.1 billion debt in just a few years. That should be an embarrassment. For the size of our jurisdiction, that should be an embarrassment. Per capita, across Canada, I would not be afraid to say we are in the worst position, and we shouldn't be. We're a small jurisdiction and we should be able to figure out a way to figure this out. That would help – if the government was really serious about helping Islanders, really serious about addressing the issues that are facing Islanders instead of helping their own.

And what difficult decisions did they make to finally show discipline? We don't know. What major structural choices did they make to get spending under control? We don't know that either. It just continues to climb. The debt and the net debt here on Prince Edward Island just continue to climb.

The government will make excuses. We're here; now they're trying to point their fingers at the feds. This government has historic numbers of revenue coming in from the federal government. They think it's just like they're having a birthday party and there's all these gifts, and "We're going to go out and spend it." But that's not how this works. These dollars are transferred to Prince Edward Island to help run our health care system, to help with all other departments of Prince Edward Island, but they go on a spending spree, and then when they run out of money, they blame the hand that feeds them.

It's always somebody else's fault. The government has a great ability over there to point to others, to blame others, but when it comes time for them to basically tighten their belts, we haven't seen that. You go through the budget book of what we've seen so far. We haven't seen it on the floor of the House to debate it and to ask questions, but we've had the

budget book, and we're waiting for it to hit the floor of this House.

We've seen increases in ministerial offices. That is a shame. When Islanders are hurting, this government – again, what do they do? They have increases....

[Interjections]

Hon. H. Perry: We can tell we hit a nerve over there, eh? Yeah, a little bit sensitive when it comes to – yeah.

[Interjections]

Hon. H. Perry: Oh, the truth hurts, let me tell you, Mr. Speaker. It certainly hurts over there. And they can make whatever excuses they want. The bottom line is this government has increased – the majority of them over there – their offices: the offices for the minister, the deputy, multiple deputy ministers in some departments, and the additional communication people that they've hired in there. I don't know why – to help them, I guess.

If this government was to maybe spend some money on real doctors and not spin doctors, we would be in a lot better shape.

And where was the big act of courage within this budget? We didn't see that. We have yet to see it. Islanders are still waiting in the dark for the Finance minister to get on the floor here and show us this great budget that she seems to think is wonderful and that they took time to prepare, that they were very thoughtful in the preparation of, and that they listened to Islanders. Well, we can't wait to see the \$410 million deficit budget hit the floor so we can ask questions of how this government is going to get this Island back on track.

There are cuts to education and to affordability programs while they're increasing the travel budgets within their departments for the ministers themselves. They're increasing their travel....

[Interjections]

[4:55 p.m.]

Hon. H. Perry: Put the books on the table and let us see. Come on. You can be over there and say no, no, no, but again, it's exactly what this motion stands for: transparency. They like to

talk the talk, but they're not going to show you. They're not going to walk the walk.

They have an opportunity to put these books on the table and go over them line by line. We haven't seen that yet. Islanders haven't seen that yet. Not a chance. We haven't seen it on the workplan yet. And why? I don't know. I think they're trying to think, "Oh, we're going to try to tire out the opposition with these bills on the floor first and not get to the meat." But guess what, Mr. Speaker –

[Interjections]

Hon. H. Perry: Legislation is very important, but some of these pieces of legislation – you're trying to say legislation that you put on the floor is more of a priority right now to Islanders?

[Interjection]

Hon. H. Perry: You think so. The lottery scheme act is more important right now than access to health care in Prince Edward Island? You should be ashamed of yourself, Mr. Speaker.

[Interjections]

Hon. H. Perry: We went through the budget books, and we have a lot of highlighted lines where increases have been made for travel and training, to ministerial offices. I'm not sure; maybe they still have some friends down with their NHL meetings in the U.S., that they want to go and wine and dine again with, and maybe do some photo ops. This is a government of photo ops. You'll see that. It's photo op after photo op after photo op.

I'm going to go a complete circle back to what I started with: this government likes to make announcements but has no follow-through, and that's unfortunate because Islanders depend on them. Islanders believed that this government was going to follow through on the announcements that they had made. Islanders are still waiting for many of these announcements that this government promised them. That's an unfortunate situation that this government has put Islanders in.

As we can say right now, no hard choices have been made by this government – no hard choices. And that's an issue. That's a problem. There are no hard decisions made by this government. We find ourselves, Islanders, in a

situation – in a terrible financial situation. Just wait – and I'm not even going to say about the bond. I'm not even going to go there because it's a terrible situation. We saw what happened in two of our neighbouring provinces, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and we are worse off than they are over there. We are worse off than they are.

Denial is what got us in this situation, I think, and until this government can recognize that they've created these issues or these problems, nothing is going to be solved. There is nothing that's going to be solved with this government. There is no real reckoning with this government's own habits. There's no real correction with this government.

Instead of choosing easy decisions – and this is what they do. They choose to make easy decisions on the backs of Islanders who can least afford them; that's what this government does. That is what I mean when I said they would not make any hard decisions. They would not take on any of the big structural problems that Islanders are facing. They would not clean up the culture. They would not level with Islanders about the books.

They had no trouble pulling back supports that ordinary people actually feel, and that's unfortunate. That's not courage, and I can tell you, that's definitely not leadership. That is passing the burden downward. I mentioned the other day about how this government loves to kick things down the road. That's what they're doing again with the financial situation that we find ourselves in; they're kicking it down the road.

[Interjections]

Speaker: You still have the floor, member.

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

Yeah, they're kicking it down the road. I said it the other day. But you know what? I imagine everyone over there already has a family doctor they can go to unfortunately, because most Islanders –

[Interjections]

[5:00 p.m.]

Hon. H. Perry: Well, you know? That might be a good question to ask in this House. We know we had the results from the last time.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Some Hon. Members: Extend the hour.

Speaker: Shall the hour be extended?

Some Hon. Members: No.

Speaker: The hour is not extended, member.

Hon. H. Perry: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to adjourn debate, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

Speaker: Thank you, member.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

M. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere, that this House adjourn until April 22nd, at 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

[The Legislature adjourned until Wednesday, 22 April 2026 at 1:00 p.m.]