



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of Prince Edward Island**

**Official Report of
Debates and Proceedings**

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Third Session of the 67th General Assembly

Thursday, 21 May 2026

No. 32

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
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Hudson , Hon. Ernie (PC)	Alberton-Bloomfield (26)	Minister of Fisheries, Rural Development and Tourism Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy

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

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

[Hon. B. Trivers in the chair]

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

Welcome to everyone in the gallery. It looks like we have a group from the St. Eleanors Lions Club, if I can see correctly without my glasses on. Welcome. Thanks for coming. Ann Bevan-Baker, nice to see you; thanks for coming in. To all my colleagues, welcome back, and those watching online. I'm looking forward to another productive day here in the Legislative Assembly.

[1:05 p.m.]

I want to give a huge shoutout to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Foundation. Yesterday, on the Big Day of Giving, they raised a record-breaking \$1,124,541. A huge congratulations to the QEH Foundation and all of their volunteers for all the work they do in raising money for the QEH. Also, I want to express my sincere thanks to every individual, family, or business who contributed. Every dollar raised goes directly to the hospital, ensuring better care, better equipment, and better outcomes for our community.

Finally, I just want to wish best of luck to Summerside native Noah Dobson and the Montreal Canadiens tonight in the Eastern Conference finals. They take on the tough Carolina Hurricanes, but PEI is rooting for Noah. I know PEI is rooting for the Canadiens, too; even some who don't really want to, I know they are anyway.

Thanks.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's a pleasure to rise and welcome all those who are watching online and those who are joining us in the gallery – St. Eleanors Lions members, welcome to today's proceedings, along with Ann; nice to see you back to keep a watch on someone in particular in here.

I just want to mention that the annual lobster roll fundraiser for the Tignish Co-operative Health Centre is taking place tomorrow. They're probably one of the best lobster rolls – the best value for the dollar – you'll find anywhere on Prince Edward Island. Of course, all proceeds go to the operation of the co-operative health care centre in Tignish. You can contact the health care centre if you want to put your name down, or they have hours in the morning – I think it's 11 until 1 – when you can just drive through the parking lot and pick it up there, and probably at the Tignish Co-op afterwards if there's anything left over. If you're in the area, they would appreciate your support.

The Premier mentioned the Montreal Canadiens, but I will mention – I mentioned many times in this House about the Professional Women's Hockey League and that, of course, Minnesota Frost was out but Montreal was in. Montreal went on to actually win the cup. So, congratulations to them, also.

With that, let's have a great day in the House.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome back to everyone in the Chamber for another great day of debate here on a Thursday afternoon. Welcome to those attending from the St. Eleanors Lions Club – great to have you out – and of course, always great to see Ann in the gallery – thanks for coming out – and everyone watching online today. I hope it's an exciting afternoon of debate.

A couple of events I wanted to highlight in my greetings:

Some good news coming out of Winnipeg, where the Canadian Chess Championship was recently held. Team PEI earned the highest total of winning points PEI has ever achieved at this national event. Every grade level from 1 to 12 was represented on the PEI team. A big congratulations to the coaches, the young players, and a special congratulations to Goldy Vu, Canadian champion, back-to-back; Joe Li, second place, back-to-back; and Rebeccah Sijo, third place. Pretty incredible results from our young, future grand chess master champions. Big congratulations to everyone who participated and did so well.

Also, the East Coast Music Association conference gets underway in Sydney, Cape Breton, today and runs through the weekend. I'd like to wish best of luck to all of the Island musicians who are nominated for an ECMA award and those who will be performing throughout the weekend. It's a great opportunity for delegates to network with other musicians and industry professionals and take in sessions on the business of music. Again, a big shout-out and best of luck to all Islander participants in the event.

Also, as we have touched on this week, the Holland College graduation services continue on for today. Today, we have graduating classes from child and youth care workers, early childhood assistants, journalism, graphic design, music performance, architecture, computer networking, plumbing/pipefitting, welding, computer networking technology – there are so many. I'm not going to name them all off, but I'd just like to, again, wish a great congratulations to recognize all the hardworking students graduating this week from Holland College.

Finally, and I think we might be hearing more on this lady tomorrow, but for my purposes today, a number of people have reached out to me just wanting to give some recognition to Marilla Ruth Millar of Ellerslie, who passed away May 16th. Tonight is the funeral service and celebration of her life, this evening.

I didn't personally know Marilla, but I've had so many people commenting about her life's work: born in 1931, six children, 19 grandchildren, and over her lifetime was a special foster mother to an incredible 139 children. Absolutely amazing. I can only imagine the difference that she made in the lives of these young people at such a vulnerable time in their lives.

[1:10 p.m.]

My sincere condolences to the entire family and special extended family of Marilla who will be grieving her loss for some time to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-Pownal.

B. Curran: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour to rise today in the Legislature and recognize everybody watching from home, especially those in District 2 Georgetown-Pownal. I would also like to recognize the fellow Lions in the gallery. I recently became a member of the Vernon River Lions Club. I want to thank you for the service to your community and the service to the province.

I rise today because I want to recognize – the Member from Summerside-Wilmot recognizes his daily watchers, and I'd be remiss if I didn't recognize one specifically who tunes in every day: Kenny Doyle. I think he's living in Montague right now. He'll be watching this and then having a bit of a siesta to get up and watch the beloved Montreal Canadiens take on the Carolina Hurricanes tonight. Go, Habs, go!

Have a great day, Kenny.

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

K. Bernard: Thank you.

Welcome back to my colleagues and staff and our Pages today – Zachary, Connor, and Jisele – and everybody joining us in the gallery – the Lions Club, and Ann Bevan-Baker; nice to see you all – and everybody tuning in from Charlottetown-Victoria Park and all over the Island. A special hello to my uncle Grant.

I, too, wanted to wish all Island artists at the ECMAs this weekend the best of luck and wish them a fun weekend.

Finally, today is my dad's birthday, so I just wanted to wish my dad a very, very happy birthday. I look forward to celebrating him this weekend.

Thank you.

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

H. MacLennan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd just like to say welcome to my colleagues here today, and welcome to those who happen to be watching from District 23. Welcome to Ann in the gallery, and a special welcome to those here from the St. Eleanors Lions Club: Gary and Cathy Gaudet, Stewart Arkwell, Anne Bernard, and Anne Arseneault. Welcome to the proceedings today. I'll have a member's

statement on the involvement that they have in their community.

Thanks.

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

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

It is a pleasure to rise today and welcome my friends from the St. Eleanors Lions Club. Thank you for all you do and all the programs that you put on, especially the ones for seniors – the lunch program and the yoga program. Thank you very much.

I'd like to just take a moment and congratulate my granddaughter Brooklyn and the class of 2026. She graduated Tuesday from the LPN program in Summerside. I'm very proud of Brooklyn and I wanted to congratulate her on that.

I would also like to send my deepest condolences to Marilla Millar's family, and I want to thank them for lending their mom to us for those 130 children that she helped us raise here on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Just standing and saying hello to everybody watching in Charlottetown-West Royalty, especially those people watching from Hunt Court. Yesterday was a hot day, and they're starting to get worried about the heat in those buildings and just getting the right temperatures going, so I just wanted to say hello to them – and I'm on it.

Today, the pins that we're wearing are for Holodomor – to remember the Holodomor genocide or famine. Just us standing up with our Ukrainian family and friends; that's what the pin is for. That happened a long time ago, in 1932, but it's good to remember what they've been through. I want to say a shout-out to our Ukrainian families.

Thank you.

Statements by Members

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

St. Eleanors Lions Club

H. MacLennan: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the St. Eleanors Lions Club, which was chartered in 1961 and is now celebrating 65 years of service to the St. Eleanors and Summerside communities.

[Hear, hear!]

H. MacLennan: Don't add that to the time.

Over those 65 years, the Lions – in conjunction with the Lioness Club – have donated more than \$2 million to Island charities. While many service clubs are struggling, this club's membership is booming, proving that their motto, "We serve," is as vital today as it was in the '60s.

[1:15 p.m.]

One of the major projects right now is the PCH equipment drive. I want to highlight the incredible effort by one member – Robbie Burt – who, despite being legally blind, hiked 170 kilometres over 33 hours this month. That effort alone raised \$15,000 for the hospital equipment, and the club will raise another \$10,000 to finish their commitment by early next year.

But as important as the money is, the club's role is a community hub. They donate space for everything from weddings, wakes, chair yoga for seniors, Scouts Canada, the Alzheimer Society, Hospice PEI, and the CNIB. Their Christmas hamper program alone helps 60 families, including 200 individuals and children, at a cost of \$10,000.

The Lions are always working on their next project. When you hear them roar, you know it is to keep these essential community efforts going. I ask all members to join me in congratulating the St. Eleanors Lions Club on 65 years of heart and hard work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Hear, hear!]

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Donagh.

Addressing Political Attacks

S. MacEwen: “There are too many politicians and senators – get rid of them. Most should be in jail or hung.”

Mr. Speaker, that was a recent response to a constituent’s Facebook post – a real person using his real account. This Facebook post wasn’t attacking anyone. It wasn’t a conspiracy theory, not political rage bait. This was a thoughtful, really smart constituent asking a reasonable question on Facebook about government spending, deficits, and what services could realistically be reduced if Islanders are concerned about the province’s financial position. And yet, this was one of the responses.

I know all of us in this House are concerned about where our public discourse is heading. I know criticism of politicians is not only acceptable in a democracy; it is necessary. Strong disagreement and tough debate are very healthy. But there’s a line between criticism and intimidation, and we should all be concerned when that line starts to disappear.

What is especially troubling is that this behaviour is no longer limited to anonymous online accounts. Increasingly, people are comfortable attaching their own names to these comments publicly.

And as elected officials, we also have a responsibility to lead by example. The tone we set in this Chamber, in interviews, and online matters. If political debate becomes more personal, hostile, and disrespectful here, we should not be surprised if it becomes worse everywhere else.

We also should not stay silent when we see it. Us – all Islanders – regardless of political stripe, should be willing to call out degrading comments, threats, and hateful rhetoric, even when it comes to people who support us or agree with us politically.

We can disagree without degrading one another. We can debate policy without attacking people. Islanders deserve it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Equality for Women’s Sports

S. Dillon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to speak about the importance of advancing equality in women and girls’ sport and to recognize Islanders who are leading the way.

Across our province and our country, women’s sports continue to grow, and that progress has been driven by the determination and excellence of athletes and advocates who refuse to accept limits, young athletes like:

- Sarah MacEachern, a defender from Canoe Cove, making her mark on the national stage earning gold with Team Canada at the World U18 Championship;
- Megan Mossey of Charlottetown, who also represented Canada at the U18 level and contributed strongly at the World Championship, showing that the next generation is ready to excel on the world stage;
- and beyond the rink, athletes like Hannah Taylor, of Summerside, a multi-time national champion representing Canada at the 2024 Paris Olympics – a talented wrestler demonstrating strength, discipline, and determination.

We can’t forget Ellen MacNearney, a Special Olympics Team Canada athlete who proudly represented Prince Edward Island on the world stage and earned multiple gold medals in cross-country skiing.

It’s important to also recognize leaders like Barb Carmichael, whose tireless advocacy for field hockey on Prince Edward Island has helped build programs, create opportunities, and empower young women for more than four decades, and so many more incredible young girls and women in our province.

While we celebrate the progress, true equality in sport demands more. It requires equity in funding, ensuring women’s programs receive fair and sustained investment, and it means equal access to quality facilities and the same opportunities that benefit from high-performance coaching and development pathways, because when we invest equally, we empower equally.

Today, let us celebrate these remarkable Islanders and reaffirm our commitment to building a future when every female has a chance to play, to compete, and to lead without barriers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability.

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

[1:20 p.m.]

Point Deroche properties

A question on Point Deroche assessment yesterday, so we dug into that one.

The assessment values are adjusted throughout the building permit process at identified stages of construction. The property in question is currently assessed as a vacant property as, while some of the work has been undertaken, it does not meet the completion threshold required to change the assessment rate. It continues to be monitored, and the market value assessment will be adjusted as the project progresses.

What I understand is it's still at foundation level, so it still sits there as a vacant property until it meets certain criteria for completion, and then the tax assessment level adjusts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Islanders are paying more at the pumps while this government still refuses to clearly explain why. Every other Atlantic province uses a transparent benchmark pricing system, but this government continues defending a manufactured Charlottetown benchmark that Islanders cannot properly see or verify. More and more Islanders are starting to feel like this government is protecting the system instead of protecting them.

Gas prices (further)

Question to the Premier: Why does this government continue defending a fuel pricing system that Islanders no longer trust?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

I haven't defended the fuel pricing system at all. In fact, what I've stated in this House is that that formula is under review by IRAC. I would absolutely like to see every component of that formula broken down in a transparent way so that Islanders can see every component of the formula and the costs that go into calculating the price of gasoline here.

I support that, and I'll continue to support that.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Mr. Speaker, yesterday there was a bill that I put forward that would have indeed done that, and that didn't pass in this House.

Islanders are looking for relief right now, and the one thing that this government could do immediately – immediately – to help Islanders is to reduce the provincial portion of the HST on fuel. Families are struggling, businesses are struggling, and Islanders are tired of hearing this government act like nothing can be done.

Question to the Premier: Will the Premier commit today to reducing the provincial portion of the HST on fuel, yes or no?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability.

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

On the HST exemption, the problem we have there is the HST exemption is completely full. The reason it is full and that exemption is maxed out – in fact, it's over max right now – is because of furnace oil, and I think it's children's books and children's clothing. We've put that all into the exemption. Those have been in there for years, so it's maxed out.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Mr. Speaker, we know what something is full of.

Islanders are looking for relief; they're not looking for long-winded excuses. This is one thing that government could actually do right now to help the people of Prince Edward Island.

So, question to the Premier: Why is this government so resistant to giving Islanders relief at the pumps?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

We're not resistant to giving Islanders relief. In fact, as I told the House yesterday, in a few short weeks Islanders will receive their first benefit through the Island essentials benefit – a benefit that is specifically designed to offset the increasing costs in this inflationary environment we're in.

Of course, the price of gasoline is rising all around the world and causing chaos in markets of all kinds and in households all around the world. We have very little control over that aspect of what's happening to the price of gasoline, but what we do have control over is our own finances in this province. We have a new program specifically designed to offset costs such as gasoline prices.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

But that doesn't help Islanders right now. It does not. Everything is down the road, down the road.

While this government keeps talking about priorities, Islanders up west are still waiting for action on a serious public safety issue that government has known about for years. If Route 2 though the Portage and West Devon area is blocked during a major storm, accident, or emergency, western PEI can effectively be cut off from the rest of the province. Earlier this week, we had an incident where just up the road, Highway 2 was blocked. Had that been a couple of kilometres more, we would not have had any access.

Government has known about this risk for years. I've raised it repeatedly since Dorian, and Fiona exposed it again, and still nothing has been done. Now, after all these years, government apparently has a backup plan which is basically

a four-foot-wide single-lane trail, and Islanders deserve better than that.

Western PEI secondary access point

Question to the Minister of Transportation: Why has this government failed to address the serious public safety risk in the very region the minister himself represents?

[1:25 p.m.]

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

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

I do appreciate the hon. member's concern for West Prince, which I share completely with him.

It's one of the things, though, that has been identified. In the event that there was any catastrophic situation that resulted in western PEI – all or part of it – needing to be evacuated, it has been determined that the Confederation Trail certainly will act and has the capacity to provide that secondary outlet from the western part of the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

If you have a plan, it must have been discussed with the Minister of Public Safety, so a question to the Minister of Public Safety: What conversations have you had with any emergency measures organizations within that area – fire departments, RCMP, et cetera – and are they aware of these plans, and will you table these plans today or tomorrow?

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

Hon. B. Thompson: Thank you, member, and thank you for the yearly question on this important topic that we have.

The emergency measures office has done a drone assessment, and it has done an all-hazards plan for the area. They have corresponded with forestry. They've corresponded with the Department of Transportation to go over

emergency measures planning. I will table whatever I have that is available tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The longer this government refuses to release a full list of cuts and reductions, the more confusion and frustration Islanders are feeling around this budget. People are calling our office asking what programs are being cut and what programs are being reduced or scaled back, and this government still refuses to give a straight answer. People should not have to dig through hundreds of pages of estimates to figure out what government is taking away from them.

Budget transparency (further)

Question to the Premier: Will you direct the Minister of Finance to table a complete list of all cuts and reductions in this budget today, yes or no?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability.

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

We're taking ourselves through the budget process. I would say for the most part, in all honesty, that most of the cuts and reductions have been identified. I can't think right now of anything that has not been identified at this point.

But I think what we have to concentrate on is the \$3.8 billion in investments that this government is making in various sectors across this province that are going to benefit families and Islanders moving forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

So, I guess the Minister of Finance is saying there will be no more cuts in the departments that are left to be brought on the floor for budget considerations. Is that correct?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability.

Hon. J. Burrridge: I'm racking my brain right now trying to bring forward all the –

[Interjection]

Hon. J. Burrridge: I'm just telling you that the majority of the budget's been through. We still have Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy to go through; we've talked about a lot of those reductions that were made. We have Justice – I can't think of anything in my head right now. Finance – we've talked about the internship. It came forward that there was a reduction there.

You continue to focus on all these line items, and you're neglecting the whole story of the budget, which is increased investments in many of these sectors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Mr. Speaker, it's not us that is concentrating on this; it's Islanders who are concerned about the programs and the cuts. Every day, something seems to trickle out by your government because you guys will not be up front with them and tell them exactly what's being reduced or cut.

I'm going to ask the Premier a very straightforward question here, and Islanders deserve a very straightforward answer in return.

Tourism contract with NHL (further)

Question to the Premier: Does the Premier support renewing the NHL contract when it expires, yes or no?

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

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

I know that we had a very lengthy and wholesome discussion on this when I took forward the budget for my department, Fisheries, Rural Development and Tourism. It was made quite clear at that point in time that there is going to be a review subsequent to this year's playoffs.

It's been noted that we're also proud to have a Canadian team in there this year. The impacts of this – but we have until October 1st of this year to make a final decision whether or not to enter into negotiations for extension of that contract.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

[1:30 p.m.]

But I did ask the Premier the question. I know the minister over there has several different departments, but he's not the Premier.

Islanders are watching this government spend millions on hockey board ads and lavish NHL events while families are cutting back on groceries, on fuel, and just basic expenses.

Question to the Premier: Will this contract be renewed, yes or no?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. R. Lantz: Mr. Speaker, this government is focused on outcomes, and I think by any measure, the outcome of the tourism industry here on Prince Edward Island is remarkable. I want to congratulate everyone involved in the industry, not just for how we've marketed Prince Edward Island, but for the products that they've put together here in Prince Edward Island, the experiences that visitors have at their disposal here when they visit Prince Edward Island. That is what we're focused on: growing the industry, and tight now, we're having excellent results.

We're engaged with the Tourism Industry Association about how we should move forward and whether they're satisfied with our current marketing efforts. The industry will have a large say in how we continue to market and how we invest in marketing Prince Edward Island going forward, Mr. Speaker.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have asked the Minister of Education and Early Years on numerous occasions to share with this House what cuts have been made to Education,

but no, I'm told to wait for the budget. The budget books do not give what the cuts are. You have to be a forensic investigator to try and uncover the cuts, and then you have to ask the right questions. This is not true transparency.

Education and Early Years funding (further)

Question to the Minister of Education and Early Years: Will you do the right thing and have the courage before you come to the floor with your budget to table what cuts have been made to all of Education?

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

Hon. R. Croucher: Again, I'll answer with this: I very well could be on the floor with my budget tomorrow. I welcome all of the conversation that's going to be had regarding my budget and what investments we've made in this fiscal year and any reductions that we've had to endure. I look forward to that conversation.

Thank you.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The *Equality Report Card* gives little or no progress on two critical caregiving priorities: comprehensive home care and home support plan, and adequate core funding for not-for-profit organizations providing essential services. It notes the new caregiver benefit amounts are well below what is required for full-time caregivers to meet basic needs. Many not-for-profits are forced to rely entirely on project-based funding.

Status of Women Equality Report Card

Question to the Minister of Social Development and Seniors: Minister, can you justify asking not-for-profit organizations, many of them run predominantly by women, to fill essential public service gaps without stable core funding, and what specific steps are making to change this?

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

Hon. B. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, member, for the question.

As the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, I work very closely with my colleagues and those in the Health department as well. You know, we've made the agreement that Status of Women is going to be a priority when they're making policies and regulations, so I'm pleased to tell the member that I'll continue to work with the Department of Health on that.

But what I do know on that is that we just had a new program out the last, probably, 18 months – the home caregiver program – where we supply funding up to \$1,500 for families who need help with keeping someone at home who may be eligible to go into long-term care. That can be a family member, a neighbour, or someone they could hire through an agency. So, we really do work hard on trying to support people when they're at home like that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The same report card rates mental health service for women and gender-diverse people as some progress. Community consultations found that the new open access drop-in counselling model is actively harmful for people with complex trauma who are forced to retell their stories each visit and cannot build trust with a consistent practitioner. Women describe having to be very loud just to get access.

[1:35 p.m.]

Question to the same minister: What will the minister do to ensure that mental health services on PEI move towards sustained, trauma-informed, relationship-based care rather than a revolving-door model, and when will Islanders see measurable results?

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

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

Again, I will work with the Minister of Health to ensure that we can stop that revolving door if that's the idea. But as far as women's health, we have, just this year, in this budget, with the IVF program, offered \$20,000 per family without being income-tested. We have the period

products at all schools, all shelters, and prescription contraceptives are free.

I work with the Department of Health on a regular basis to make sure that we can keep these programs going, and that's something that he and I will have a conversation about. Thank you for bringing that forward. I appreciate it.

Thank you.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank you for that. The same report card confirms homelessness is a growing problem on PEI. The report notes that most shelters remain part-time, forcing residents out during the day – a situation described as particularly problematic outside of Charlottetown. The report gives the government little or no progress on the goal of ending homelessness and delivering services on a Housing First basis.

Question the Minister of Housing. We are moving in the wrong direction, minister. What is your plan to transition PEI's shelter system to full-time Housing First services across PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing and Communities.

Hon. K. Dollar: Mr. Speaker, thank you, and thank you for the question. It's a very important thing and something that we're very much hands-on.

All this supportive housing is very much new to us here. When we came into power, we had four supportive housing beds. We now have 134 or 135. We are always looking to improve, and we're monitoring everything that we're doing as we go forward.

Thank you.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The housing budget contains a line item of \$691,200, described only as "various," and then for emergency sheltering and transport. The government said that this funding was allocated to families that need emergency housing and

supports, but Islanders deserve to know whether this money went directly to families in need or whether a significant portion was consumed by transportation costs such as taxis to and from Charlottetown. This money needs to go to families.

Budget transparency (further)

Question to the same minister: Minister, will you commit today to tabling a full, itemized breakdown of every dollar spent under that “various” line, including the exact number of families that were supported, the services they received, and the total amount then spent on transportation, including for taxi services?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing and Communities.

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

This was talked about yesterday on the floor. My finance gentleman was here with me. He answered that question, I thought, yesterday. He didn’t have that information with him, but I’ll go back and see if he can find it and come back with it.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government has had years to recruit family doctors, yet, according to the Medical Society, there have been virtually no net gains in physicians over the last two years.

Physician recruitment (further)

Yesterday in Question Period, the minister said, “We have so many residents here on PEI; we have to do a better job of keeping those physician residents on PEI. If you can believe it or not, some of them were never even reached out to.” That is a remarkable statement seven years into the government’s mandate.

Minister: What exactly did you mean by that statement?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. C. Deagle: I meant exactly what I said, Mr. Speaker.

What we have done now is moved to reach out to these residents to let them know what we offer here on PEI – not just that PEI is a great place to live and work, but what we offer in each area. If you want to work in Kensington, this is what we have. We have a medical home and the supports that are in that home.

We had the Health PEI CEO, Preston Smith from UPEI, Kevin Workentin, our chief medical officer – all had dinner with the residents last week. I stopped in to say hello to them. I was actually walking back with the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park when I was heading over there. It was really refreshing to hear how supported they felt with that meeting. They could ask frank questions and get good answers. I think we’re making good progress on that, Mr. Speaker.

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

[1:40 p.m.]

G. McNeilly: Well, they weren’t even reached out when they needed to be reached out to, so no matter how you spin it, minister, that’s not a success story. There are 23,000 open physician positions for family medicine across the country, and we only graduate 1,300. This minister – something went wrong with recruitment again.

Are you seriously saying, minister, that you failed to use even the most basic recruitment measures and now you’re making up for it? How are we supposed to retain doctors when you don’t even reach out to them when other provinces are?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I think, as the member pointed out, there’s a shortage of family physicians across Canada; I would say probably North America. What we have to do is train our own physicians here on PEI, which the UPEI medical school will do, which the Liberal Party was against at the time – and now look to take all the credit for the medical school. This is something that they often do. They can’t really pick a lane. Once they see that it’s a good news story and that Islanders are behind it, they want to get inside.

What we're doing is – we're not going to see the fruits of our labour for the medical school for probably another six years once we start pumping out about 20 doctors a year, but we have to keep those physicians here. I'm working with the department and Health PEI right now to come up with a return-in-service agreement to offer those medical students to keep them here on PEI. In the coming weeks, we'll be announcing a marketing campaign on how we're changing our recruitment strategy and targeting physicians in the U.S. and across Canada.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I regularly hear from Islanders who are on the patient registry and are frustrated with the lack of transparency and the lack of answers they get when they ask questions. Like so many things under this government, information about the patient registry seems to be needlessly hidden behind a curtain. Health PEI has told Islanders on the registry that there is no way to expedite them up the list and that they use the date of application to determine someone's place in line.

Patient registry (further)

Question to the Minister of Health. The patient registry continues to be front and center for many Islanders, including now the 1,400 Islanders in the Kensington area who just learned they will soon also now be on the registry. Can you explain, minister, why some people get called off the registry rather quickly while others have been on it for upwards of ten years?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. C. Deagle: I would not say that we're trying to hide anything with the patient registry. It's on the website. You can go look at it any time that you wish. We're not trying to hide anything.

I do know that, perhaps let's say if a physician wants to open up a practice in Souris, they would try and take patients off the registry in that area. Perhaps they were only on the registry for a year, but someone in Kensington was on for five years. Does the person from Kensington

want to drive to Souris? I don't know. That could be a factor in it. Sometimes physicians take patients off the registry on their own. They might choose to do that. But there's certainly no political interference in how that happens.

Thank you.

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

M. MacFarlane: I appreciate that, minister, and as a follow-up to your comments, when someone applies to the patient registry, they choose their top two preferred regions for their future family doctor to be located, but we've come to learn that Health PEI doesn't even use the second preferred location when choosing patients. Many Islanders, especially those with chronic health conditions, would happily drive from Summerside to Charlottetown or from Montague to Stratford if it meant getting a doctor.

Question to the minister. Many Islanders on the patient registry have been waiting for years. Why not give them the option to travel to any location if they're willing to travel?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. C. Deagle: I believe they are given the option, just as with the physician that will be leaving Souris. If he chooses to open up in Charlottetown, his patients are more than welcome to follow him to Charlottetown if he chooses to do so.

I don't know what the Green Party is trying to get at here. They're, I guess, looking to politically interfere in how that patient registry works. If someone could provide me with a list of when I can politically interfere and when I can't, it would be awfully helpful.

Thank you.

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

M. MacFarlane: These are questions from Islanders who want to know why the registry is not working for them and why they can't get information on where they stand in the registry. These are Islanders who have been on the registry for years, even a decade, and others somehow get a doctor before them, even after a

few months, in the same community. There seems to be no rhyme or reason, and it's incredibly frustrating for those who have been waiting because it's clear that it's not a first-come, first-served list like we'd been told.

Question to the minister: Will you ask Health PEI to begin telling Islanders what number they are on the patient registry so Islanders have a sense of where they fall, and then we can at least hold the process accountable?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. C. Deagle: Mr. Speaker, I won't politically interfere as the member is asking me to.

Thank you.

[1:45 p.m.]

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

K. Bernard: Families on PEI are facing rising costs at every stage of life, including at the end of life. Several provinces, including Alberta, Ontario, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia, allow standalone cremation services, meaning they are not tied to a funeral home. This creates more competition and more consumer choice.

Cremation services

A question to the Premier, or whoever is going to answer: Why are Islanders denied the same options that could lower cremation costs for grieving families?

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

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

That legislation has been outdated for quite a while and maybe needs to be looked at to provide that service. We're working with the funeral home associations across this Island to make sure that we can do it fair for all Islanders.

Thank you.

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

K. Bernard: Thank you.

PEI's legislation effectively requires cremation services to operate only at or in connection with a licensed funeral home. This removes the option for standalone crematoriums, limits competition, and forces families into bundled funeral arrangements they may or may not be able to afford or want.

Question to the Premier: Will you commit to looking into the option for direct crematorium services to give Islanders a more affordable choice and help reduce financial pressure on families during one of the hardest moments in their lives?

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

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

Thank you to the member for bringing this forward. I must also give credit to the Member from Kensington-Malpeque, who's been advocating for this as well.

It is time, but we want to work with the funeral home board to make sure that we can do this fairly so it will be fair for all Islanders.

So, yes. The answer is yes.

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

K. Bernard: Thank you. I would say hippity-hop; let's get it done.

Across Canada, many jurisdictions permit standalone crematoria and even separate transfer services, helping families choose only the services they actually need and want instead of paying for expensive funeral service funeral packages.

Question to the minister: Will you commit to removing barriers by modernizing the law to give Islanders more flexibility, more transparency, and lower cost of end-of-life options? If so, when can we expect this?

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

Hon. B. Thompson: Thank you.

I must say that the funeral home board has come a long way in the last few years because of certain instances that have happened, so they're very well organized and they're very committed to making this better.

I will push for this to happen because it is changing the way we do funerals here, the way we do cremations, and it's important that Islanders have options and can afford those options.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

S. Dillon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Department of Education recognizes the importance of ensuring that educators are supported in delivering evidence-based practices in our classrooms by providing literacy and math coaches.

Support for educational assistants

Question to the Minister of Education: Can you explain the role of a literacy and a math coach within the Department of Education and how they're currently supporting our classrooms?

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

Hon. R. Croucher: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question.

Our coaches throughout the department – they're highly valued frontline supports that work very closely with our teachers to strengthen classroom outcomes and improve the student outcome in our schools. It's evidence based. It's data driven. They work in classrooms to assist with co-planning, co-teaching, and those types of things. Again, they're very valuable assets in our classrooms.

Thank you.

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

S. Dillon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would agree; a shout-out to all of our literacy and math coaches, and the absolute excellent job that they do assisting teachers in our classrooms.

Within our educational system is the vital role of an educational assistant, and the role that they play each day in supporting students with complex and diverse needs within our schools. In the last few years, we've seen an increased number of educational assistants in our system, many of whom enter the role at varying levels of formal training.

Question to the same minister: Who presently provides direct support, guidance, and professional development opportunities for educational assistants within our education system?

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

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

[1:50 p.m.]

I guess the bulk of that responsibility would be with our educational authorities. We certainly do assist them and support them in those training opportunities.

We're always looking at better ways to – upskill is I guess not the right word, but utilize our EAs to the best of their ability and really capture the expertise that they have. We are undertaking a review of our EAs in hopes to better understand how we can utilize and assist them to their full capacity.

Thank you.

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

S. Dillon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With increased demands on educational assistants, it's more important than ever to create a peer-to-peer or a coach to support educational assistants working in our system. In doing so, it could support retention, consistency, and professional growth within this field.

Question to the Minister of Education and Early Years: Will the department consider piloting a peer-to-peer support program or coach position for educational assistants so they can support one another, share best practices, and expand the growth within this field?

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

Hon. R. Croucher: I mean, I don't see why that's something that we wouldn't consider, I suppose. Perhaps our EAs could potentially organize and manage that amongst themselves. Again, the PSB and the CSLF are responsible for the delivery of training for our EAs and other support staff within the system, but certainly that's a suggestion that we can take under advisement and pass along and perhaps include in our review of our EAs that's upcoming.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

T. DesRoches: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With the presence of MSX and Dermo in our waters, it was no surprise that our \$27 million oyster industry is in a devastating crisis. This industry is going to take a number of years to rebound, and one of the ways to rebound is to get some seed in our water.

Oyster industry (further)

A question for the Minister of Fisheries: Minister, we know that it's going to take at least four years for our seed to grow in the waters and to be ready to go to market, and these growers are depending on that. Where are we at with getting seed for the growers?

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

Hon. E. Hudson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I do thank the hon. member for the question. He's continuously shown support and advocacy for this very important industry.

Atlantic Aqua was the firm that put the application into CFIA for the ability for them to bring in seed from the United States. As I understand, that has been approved, and that seed should be coming in as we get into the month of June.

Thank you.

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

T. DesRoches: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Back to that same minister.

Minister, I've been informed by a number of my constituents that are smaller growers that they have called and applied to get some seed, and they've been told that there's none left; that it's all spoken for.

Is this true, minister?

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

Hon. E. Hudson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (Indistinct) best on this. As I had mentioned, it's Atlantic Aqua who put in the application to CFIA. Then, the PEI Aquaculture Alliance, actually, on their website, has the outline of the process for any ones who are looking at acquiring some of this seed, what process they go through, and I will table that information later today. But having said that, I would encourage anybody to take a look at the Aquaculture Alliance website; it does provide the details there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

T. DesRoches: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This seed that came in, a lot of it was federally funded by ACOA, but now they're being told that some growers can and cannot get it.

Back to that same minister.

If this was funded by ACOA, a small grower can't really get a hold of the ministers at the federal level to talk to them about this. Minister, can you talk to your counterparts and make sure that this is available for all growers so that the little guy doesn't get pushed out of this business?

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

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

[1:55 p.m.]

I have and will continue to advocate for all aspects of this vital industry in the province of

PEI. As the hon. member knows, I have continuously reached out to the federal Minister of Fisheries advocating for assistance. Certainly, it was good to see that the federal government did step up to the plate to a certain extent with funding through ACOA as well as a licence buyback.

But as I've said, I have and will continue to advocate for every aspect of this industry.

Thank you.

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

G. McNeilly: Moments ago, we talked about doctor recruitment. I think it's an important subject. We heard that the minister didn't even reach out to grads. That's over two years. Normally, we get 60 to 75 percent retention rate of those graduates. I think it's about eight people.

Physician recruitment (further)

Minister: You said you reached out to them. How many of those people are coming to Prince Edward Island to train, for the last two years of graduating classes?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I don't know the exact number off the top of my head, but I can recall some of my conversations with the students, or the residents, I think it was last Wednesday or Thursday.

I know one wants to work in the ER at the PCH. One wants to be a family doctor here. I think she might be a first-year resident, so that would be about another year away. Another one wants to work in the KCMH in emerg and some hospitalist work. One wants to work in the QEH. I spoke to a Dal med student last night that will start their residency here on PEI next year. He met with recruitment yesterday. They took him out to dinner. He's going to open up a family practice here. He actually wants to practice in York. I know the Minister of Justice would be quite happy with that.

We have a small number of residents. They can easily be reached out to – the minister, the Premier, any MLA, and recruitment. I think

we're doing a much better job in doing that and making them feel supported and that we want them here on PEI and what we have to offer.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's just the problem is that there are not enough coming and there are not enough staying, and now we're hearing communication after the fact. I appreciate the minister continuing to reach out because we do need family doctors here on Prince Edward Island. Your government has had some success with specialists – terrible job of recruiting and retaining longitudinal family medicine specialists.

A few years ago, there was an initiative encouraging doctors to recruit doctors, and this was encouraged by the Medical Society. What happened to this initiative? Was it allowed to fade away?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. C. Deagle: I'll be honest, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure exactly what happened to that initiative, but I do think that there is a role for physicians to play in recruiting physicians. Actually, the resident – well, will be a resident very soon – mentioned to me last night: Why not send some of the residents to some of the conferences where a lot of the residents attend across Canada and use them to help them recruit here to PEI? Which I thought was an excellent idea.

I think if we sit down and listen to the physicians, the residents, and hear what they have and their concerns, that will help us recruit physicians here in PEI.

Thank you.

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

G. McNeilly: Well, MSPEI actually represents the doctors, and they said that they can do it. So, I'm asking the minister if he will reach back to MSPEI. Spend the money. I don't know if – it was only a \$250,000 program, but it had doctors recruiting doctors to Prince Edward Island. It's all hands on deck.

Will the minister reach out to MSPEI and put this program back in, whether it's in your department or with MSPEI? We need to have all hands on deck because this government is failing at recruiting and retaining doctors.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I don't know what the results were of that program when it was in place, if there was a lot of success with it or if there were any issues with it and it wasn't working or there could have been things that could be changed to make it different so it would succeed. Maybe it was successful; honestly, I'm not sure.

I can go back and find and look into that because I think it is worthwhile. I think it is a good idea, but just without having the background on it, I'd like to delve into that with the department first.

Thank you.

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

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

A question to the Minister of Housing. We know that we can't get the patient registry down; maybe we can get people into housing maybe before the turn of the decade.

[2:00 p.m.]

Affordable housing (further)

Question to the Minister of Housing. There's a housing project in Winsloe, two twin towers. It was supposed to speed up getting people into housing. It seems to be as slow as molasses getting people into housing.

Minister, when are actual people going to live in those two housing buildings?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing and Communities.

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

I want to thank the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty for continuing to give me the opportunity to get up to speak to the wonderful

things that are happening in the Department of Housing and the great work that we're doing.

Those units will be opening up very shortly. The first building, 82 units – another 80 people to come off the housing registry. We're sitting at about a 60 percent reduction right now. I haven't done the math on the additional 80. I'll let the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty figure it out.

Thank you.

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

G. McNeilly: People can't live in tiny homes under this minister. They can't live in big homes under this minister.

When is the minister going to work on helping the 218 people on the HIFIS system get into tiny homes or big homes? I don't care. They're on the streets. When are you going to fix the problem?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing and Communities.

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

I think it was a week or two ago I educated the member on what those HIFIS numbers meant. He knows full well that it's not a true, accurate number of people living in tents or on the streets. I did tell him that we do have capacity in our shelters – for the people that choose not to, they can.

I expect that I'm going to have a very busy summer welcoming tenants into our housing.

Thank you.

Speaker: That's the end of Question Period, members.

Statements by Ministers

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

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

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

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table information with regard to the details of the oyster seed that is being imported by Atlantic Aqua Farms, as well as the timeline on this, and I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

K. Bernard: Thank you.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a letter from the Child and Youth Advocate, “Office of the Child and Youth Advocate Calls to Action Regarding the 2026-2027 PEI Budget,” and his concerns with those. I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Third Party, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

K. Bernard: By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a report from the Child and Youth Advocate’s office: *OCYA Statement of Concern and Calls to Action – Children’s Rights Implications of the 2026-2027 PEI Budget*, in which there are concerns expressed over the budgeting process, the absence of a child’s rights lens put over it, how it’s regressive for children, and how when there are budget restraints, children and youth should remain a priority and not be the first to be considered in cuts. I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Third Party, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

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. Premier, that the 1st order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Speaker: Minister.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere to chair the consideration of grant of supply to His Majesty.

[2:05 p.m.]

[S. Dillon in the chair]

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

Minister, do you have a stranger you would like to bring on to the floor?

Hon. B. Thompson: I do.

Chair: Shall it be granted? Granted.

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

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Bobbi Lawlor-White, director of finance.

Chair: For those that are following along, we are on page 124.

Department Management

Corporate Management

“Appropriations provided for the operation of the office of the Minister and Deputy Minister and centralized corporate and administrative functions for the department.” Administration: 25,700. Equipment: 20,600. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 15,800. Professional Services: 51,000. Salaries: 772,800. Travel and Training: 26,100. Grants: 250,800.

Total Corporate Management: 1,162,800

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair. Welcome back, Bobbi and minister.

I'm just looking at a few of the lines here in the corporate services section. Looking at the professional services line, there was \$23,750 spent on a solicitor pay scale review. Can you tell us what the purpose of that was and the outcome from that spend?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't have the outcome. The report is finalized, but it's still working its way through the minister's office. Every probably five to ten years, we just do a review for the solicitors within our department just to ensure that they're in line with the market outside of government.

M. MacFarlane: Is that a local firm engaged to that consulting work?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We used MNP, which I believe would have been a local.... They do have a local office, I think, in Stratford they're in. but they're national as well.

M. MacFarlane: Just looking at the next line underneath, a quick question on that. The amicus curiae, which I believe is a friend of the court, which is engaged for self-represented litigants – \$9,000 was spent. Are you seeing an increasing trend on that line? Because there are a lot more self-represented litigants now than ever before.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That's the first I've seen since I started in my three years here, but there could be more next year, it's hard to say. Those are kind of (Indistinct) appointed, so....

M. MacFarlane: Okay, so there's no money budgeted specifically for that going forward. Is it just on as needed basis?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Exactly.

M. MacFarlane: On the salaries line then, moving quickly through it, there's quite a jump in salaries – over 100 percent increase in salaries. What's happening there?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We did get money in the budget this year for a bail supervision program. There are seven positions in there. We did reduce some of it assuming it will be a Q3 start.

We're going to develop the bail supervision program, which we assume will take about two quarters to roll out.

It's a bit of a....

Hon. B. Thompson: It's why it's in this budget because it's new.

M. MacFarlane: Bail supervision program – you mentioned seven new hires. Are they all within that program?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yes, they all will be dedicated to that program.

M. MacFarlane: These aren't probation officers. Can you tell us a little bit more about what their role is intended to do? That's quite an increase to the complement of staff.

[2:10 p.m.]

Bobbi Lawlor-White: It is. There are about four bail supervision officers within that. I don't know necessarily if that will be a probation officer at this point or how.

Again, we're going to develop the program and try to figure out exactly what will work and what's the best suit within there. We have the money to do that. I assume it will be a probation officer of some sort, but we don't know that exactly yet.

M. MacFarlane: I assume there must have been some challenges with probationary periods and people out on terms of probation to justify this additional spent time of financial austerity. What was the identified issue to be addressed?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Well, our remand rates with the correctional facilities are very high in Prince Edward Island. We're seeing cost pressures within correctional facilities to house the – make sure we have staff on site for those. We anticipate once this program rolls out, we'll be able to reduce that number within the correctional facilities and have other monitoring.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you for that. I'll keep moving through this.

The book says that \$60,000 was spent. I think this is still on the professional services line, yes. But when we look in the bigger book, we only have about half of that broken out. What was the additional spent?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: The solicitor salary scale review, I think there was another invoice outstanding. We were forecasting that full spend, which was I think close to around \$50,000 is where it landed – a little under \$50,000. That's just the difference in where we thought we would end up.

M. MacFarlane: Moving down to the line for the grants, we have \$114,000 on the community legal clinic. That clinic has expanded to provide some legal aid service as well. Where is the full funding that we would see for the full operation of the community legal clinic?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Just to clarify, Legal aid will still be separate, and this is kind of other, every day legal problems for the community. The legal aid and this will be two distinct programs.

We do have a grant in budget this year coming up for \$250,000. That's government's portion to find the community legal clinic. The law foundation is also going to match that as well.

M. MacFarlane: That funding stands up the increased role and capacity of the community legal clinics. I know they hired the director on there. I think Andrew MacDonald was recently hired there to provide the – and I'm calling it legal aid; I know that's separate from legal aid provided by the province – but that's the current year's funding combined with the law foundation's grant to operate the increased capacity of the community legal information clinic.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: It's run by CLI, so it's a little bit different because there is a specific community legal clinic, make sure I get my wording right – run by the CLI. This is for them to stand it up and to move into the operational phase. They're in the staffing process and hoping to open up early summer.

M. MacFarlane: Then we look at the grant line as a whole and it was underspent by \$130,000. What happened there?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We had the budget for the \$250,000 that I mentioned we were going to fund the community legal clinic with. I believe it went into budget a couple of years ago. So, it's just been in the design phase. This past fiscal year, '25-26, it was in conceptual design. They're working towards building capacity. They only needed the \$114,000 that we spent

last year. They weren't in full operational stage yet.

M. MacFarlane: I think my last question on two on this section would be – and maybe it's not the right section, but I'll ask anyway. There was an engagement of legal services from the Province with respect to the former Minister of Environment and what happened with the wetland permitting in the Summerside area. Is there a spend in this section for retaining the legal opinion that resulted in what the – is this the section, minister?

[2:15 p.m.]

Bobbi Lawlor-White: It's not in there at that point. I can't recall if it is in ours or if it would be in Environment's budget.

M. MacFarlane: Just on that subject again, we had asked in the House for tabling of documents related to that scenario and we haven't had those. We've had some documents tabled from the Minister of Land and Environment, but there were no documents tabled further to the request in the Legislature from Justice. Can those documents be tabled through this process, minister?

Hon. B. Thompson: I can look. I can see. It's not a budget question.

M. MacFarlane: I appreciate the answer, minister. If you could, or we can ask again in the Legislature in Question Period, but I thought I'd ask you on this section.

Chair: I don't know if it's in this section, so I don't know whether that's something that you – I'm not 100 percent clear on the process either, so maybe somebody can guide me, but if it's not in this section, is that something that you have to wait until the section comes back to have information brought back on that section?

Hon. B. Thompson: I can find out.

Chair: He'll let you know.

M. MacFarlane: That's all I had. Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Justice Policy, Planning and FPT Relations

Justice Policy, Planning and FPT Relations

“Appropriations provided to assist the Minister and Deputy Minister regarding policy, planning, and legislation development, as well as FPT relations, and the PEI Human Rights Commission.” Administration: 41,700. Equipment: 7,500. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 54,400. Professional Services: 303,300. Salaries: 1,496,500. Travel and Training: 34,300. Grants: PEI Human Rights Commission: 1,055,800; Other: 653,800.

Total Justice Policy, Planning and FPT Relations: 3,647,300

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

This section, I think, funded the cyberbullying project last year, \$22,500. Was there a report issued on that, or is there an update you could provide on that project?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't have a report, but –

Hon. B. Thompson: It's going to be released in the coming weeks.

M. MacFarlane: Sorry, released in the coming weeks, did I hear the minister say? Okay. And released – that's publicly released?

Hon. B. Thompson: Yeah.

M. MacFarlane: On the FPT relations, what are we funding, and what are the provincial priorities?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Could you clarify what we're funding? What exactly are you looking for?

M. MacFarlane: Well, the section says appropriations provided to – as well as FPT relations, so what's the provincial component or the provincial focus when we're talking about FPT relations as it pertains to the section? Is there anything specific?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't think there's anything specific in it. It would just be any of the federal agreements or other provincial agreements that the department would have; this division would kind of help manage those relationships. They have a lens in this division of the entire department, so it's not just one section within Justice and Public Safety. They're kind of

looking at it from a whole department perspective, and if there's funding over in one division, does it make sense to bring someone else from a different division in?

M. MacFarlane: Okay, streamlining –

Hon. B. Thompson: The federal partnerships with restorative justice, Indigenous justice programs, and indigenous court work – that's all federal-provincial relationships, so that would....

M. MacFarlane: Okay. I guess moving on to grants and looking at the Human Rights Commission, if I'm reading it, it looks like the grant was cut by about \$110,000. Is that a concern? How did you arrive at that decision to cut the Human Rights Commission's grant?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: They have been operating at a surplus for the last at least two fiscal years, so they already have the money in their bank account from the last two fiscals. Government just pulled back the grant this year because they already had the money, if that makes sense.

M. MacFarlane: Sure. How is the commission getting along, though, with clearing out some of the backlogs? Because that sort of seems to run at odds, if there's a surplus but yet we do hear that there are backlogs in processing complaints. Do you have any information on that?

[2:20 p.m.]

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I have some statistics. It looks similar year over year: files carried over from the prior year for '25-26 was 121; previous year was 126. It did reduce by five files.

Hon. B. Thompson: They're arm's length from the department. They're independent. We fund them. The Auditor General is doing an audit right now, so I guess that might tell us where the improvements can be.

M. MacFarlane: Just looking, then, below that human rights grant line; the other grants were \$300,000 underspent. What happened there?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We had budget of about \$300,000 for a provincial response to impaired driving initiative. We were trying to work with external parties – municipal police force – to come up with a new agreement. We had a federal agreement. It expired a year ago, so this

was kind of the provincial response to that, to replace it. We were trying to change the parameters a little bit and instead of funding positions, funding based on activities, and we weren't able to ever come to an agreement with the external parties. So, we had the money but we couldn't spend it.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. Thank you.

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

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair, and welcome back again.

I'm just looking at the list of positions in this section. I see the gender-based violence policy coordinator, the restorative justice coordinator, therapeutic courts coordinator, and therapeutic courts caseworker. Are all those positions filled?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yes, they are all filled now.

K. Bernard: And the gender-based violence policy coordinator – is that person stationed just in the department, or is that a position that would work with other departments as well?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: They are housed within our department, but they would work with – Interministerial Women's Secretariat I would think would be one that they would work with, but they are specific to JPS.

K. Bernard: I forgot to ask. My first question was going to be: Do we see any cuts in this section?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Just within the grants, where I mentioned we couldn't spend the money.

K. Bernard: That's where I'll go next. The therapeutic courts or the restorative justice courts – is there an update on how those are going? Is there any work left to do there, or are we rolling?

Hon. B. Thompson: Therapeutic court is rolling. It has really been very successful – so successful that there is appetite to expand into mental health and addictions. So, that's the next phase.

K. Bernard: That's in the plans?

Hon. B. Thompson: Yes.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: There was a position that we annualized this year – we had half-year funding in the prior year; this year it was annualized – for that phase 2 piece.

K. Bernard: That's great to hear.

I'm looking at the Gladue reports, and there's \$24,856. Is there a max for that, or is that funding kind of given as Gladue reports are needed?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I believe the max is \$30,000 within a federal agreement that we have. I could be – \$62,000, sorry. They did increase it to \$62,000.

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

G. McNeilly: Thanks very much. Welcome, Bobbi.

Just a few questions there. I always ask about the Gladue report because – just to explain – I think it's very good thing where Indigenous people can get a report done or something done to help them if they get into problems with justice. I think that's good, and I always look at that number as a sense to – are we doing a lot of Gladue reports, or what's the trend? How's that trending?

I noticed that number might be a little bit higher than last year. Were there more Gladue reports, or how are we trending with that?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't have any specific statistics on that, but within our professional services, that's just a point in time. So, it could be a timing issue – that we did more earlier in the year this year versus the end of the year last year.

[2:25 p.m.]

Hon. B. Thompson: It's a great partnership with MCPEI. They're doing a tremendous job with that. A lot of provinces are backlogged with Gladue reports, and we are not. So, they're doing an excellent job.

G. McNeilly: I appreciate that, minister. It's very, very important, and I follow that along pretty closely, so I appreciate your time on that.

I'm glad that you had \$300,000 to look at impaired driving. I just don't know how to feel about not spending the money. Can you just give me a little bit more information about why? Did a partnership break down or did we not have a strategy to...? How come we didn't get rolling on that with our partners?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We did have a strategy. Our director in this division actually had many reach-ins with the municipal police, along with our public safety director. There just wasn't engagement on the other end, really.

Hon. B. Thompson: It had to do with – the money was for some training, and I think a shortage of officers in some areas might have been.... We don't have time to do that training right now, so it wasn't offered. It's unfortunate.

G. McNeilly: Was that federal money coming in? Did we lose the money, or are we going to try in the future? Maybe it wasn't the right model, perhaps? I'm not sure. I'm just trying to figure out – all money towards anything that we can to curb impaired driving should be spent. I know the minister – we've talked about that. Just wanted to see what the strategy is.

Does that \$300,000 carry over? What are we doing next year to try to improve on where we are?

Hon. B. Thompson: It's still a priority for sure. A lot of work has been done in training and buying the proper equipment purchases to help assist with that, but it's something that we have to continue to push our partners with – to be able to take advantage of what we are offering.

G. McNeilly: So we are going to carry that money over, or that money will be there next year, or...?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: It's not there next year, but we do have other pots of money for training specific within Public Safety division. So, if that's something that we can land on, then it could be repurposed for that.

G. McNeilly: Thank you for that.

Hon. B. Thompson: For municipal police.

G. McNeilly: Municipal police. Okay.

Thank you.

Hon. B. Thompson: There's a MADD monument being – you'll have to come to that when it's being unveiled in the next couple of weeks.

G. McNeilly: I'd love to. Thanks, minister.

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

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

Just going back to the Gladue reports for a minute. I notice it's listed under consulting services. Kind of a two-part question here: Do we have in-house capacity for that within the department? If so, do you have an idea of how many are qualified to do the Gladue reports?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: No. Those are done direct within MCPEI.

Hon. B. Thompson: We contract it out to them.

K. Bernard: I'm looking under the same place, the consulting services: the Prevention Strategy – Youth Engagement Sessions. What's that for?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That was for the cyberviolence strategy.

K. Bernard: Right. Okay.

I've heard some concerns about the strategy just in terms of the fear that some of the information – and I don't know how the consultations took place and what information is there, I don't know anything about that, but just some concerns that it may be outdated before its released. I don't know if that's.... I'm just saying what I heard. Again, I have no information. I don't know. But is that something that –

Hon. B. Thompson: The strategy that I have been presented – it's a moving strategy. I don't think it's outdated. I think it's built on that fact that this is a moving – I'm not going to say target, but that's....

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Ever-evolving.

Hon. B. Thompson: It's evolving. It's always evolving. That's how the strategy is built.

K. Bernard: I appreciate that. I know it wasn't budget related. It's just been on my mind, and since this was the section....

With the mental health strategy, is that finished?
Where is that?

[2:30 p.m.]

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That is specific to JPS itself, for our staff. It is finished. We did just hire somebody on a temporary basis to help implement some of the strategies that came out from that report, so that will be worked on during this fiscal year.

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

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Financial and Consumer Services

Regulatory Oversight

"Appropriations provided for Prince Edward Island financial sector regulations, including: oversight of private and public capital raising activity, distribution of investment and insurance products and services, provincially-regulated deposit taking and lending, real estate trading, charitable gaming, payday lending, debt collecting, and consumer credit reporting." Administration: 38,900. Equipment: 2,400. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 8,300. Professional Services: 44,500. Salaries: 909,400. Travel and Training: 13,200. Grants: 140,000.

Total Regulatory Oversight: 1,156,700

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

I can't find the line in the book right now as I'm looking, but the consulting services had a policy development line for \$25,000. What was the policy developed with that money?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That was around consumer protection.

M. MacFarlane: Did it result in any new policy?

I think it would just be an internal policy for the team. It would probably lead to some of the regulation or act changes that are potentially upcoming, like anything that needed to be changed from that review.

M. MacFarlane: That's interesting because it's such a big issue these days, whether it's scam,

fraud – whatever. So, I appreciate seeing some policy developed in that area for sure.

Looking at the grants line, there's a bump up to \$140,000, so like a 40 percent increase. Is there something contemplated with that?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yes, we did – and it's not new money. You'll see the lines are kind of up and down along this section. We internally reallocated \$40,000 for the Floral Hills Memorial Gardens cemetery grant. They were at \$50,000; now they're up to \$90,000. It's an operating grant.

Hon. B. Thompson: We own a cemetery.

M. MacFarlane: Yeah, that's interesting. Do we support other cemeteries?

Hon. B. Thompson: No, this went into financial difficulties. The person passed away, and basically, government had to come in and take over a cemetery.

M. MacFarlane: So, there's a bump up, from the \$50,000 last year up to \$90,000 this year.

Can I ask – maybe two questions in one here: Was there previous money before this \$50,000? And what's the extrapolation for how much funding the cemetery is expected to need to get to where it needs to be?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yes, they did have some money on deposit; they've gone through that just with their operations. They do have sales revenue of about \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year. They do prepaid plots; I guess that's the right wording on that. They've also been hit with increased costs in the plaques that they use. I think they're bronze, so the cost on that has risen.

Hon. B. Thompson: There are no headstones in that... Edison Shea, I believe, is the volunteer that's running it. He has a group of volunteers that help maintain that cemetery.

M. MacFarlane: Okay, so then, the Funeral Association and Professions Board has a \$50,000 operational grant. Can you answer as to how long they've been receiving that grant and how much longer into the future will they receive it? What's the money for?

[2:35 p.m.]

Bobbi Lawlor-White: This is the second year of a five-year grant. It was to get them fully operational for a new enhanced inspection regime.

[Interjection]

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yeah, exactly. So, it's the same; it's just a five-year grant that's been approved and allocated to them. So, year 2.

K. Bernard: I'm just looking at the description of what this section is and I'm looking at the payday lending. Given it's here, I'm assuming government has some sort of.... I don't know the word I'm looking for –

Hon. B. Thompson: Regulation?

K. Bernard: So, government regulates those?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: There's a *Payday Loans Act*. That would be through this division.

K. Bernard: I'm just wondering if we would have seen any changes to this. I'm just thinking of the interest that people pay there and the trouble that people can get into that. Given the times we're in now, have there been any changes there?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Not within the budget. I can't speak to the act itself.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Registry Services

“Appropriations provided for the administrations of four provincial document and information registries: Corporate and Business Names Registry, Vital Statistics Registry, Lobbyists Registry, and Personal Property Registry.” Administration: 16,800. Equipment: 4,600. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 33,100. Professional Services: 29,000. Salaries: 1,199,100. Travel and Training: 2,900.

Total Registry Services: 1,285,500

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

On the registry services, we're looking at the corporate and business names registry, is there any funding in this section to make any changes

or enhancements to the corporate and business names registry as it currently exists?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That would be in our capital budget. There are two capital projects going on right now, one for improvements in the vital stats part, and then a separate one for corporate registry and licensing.

M. MacFarlane: That's interesting that's capital. I never usually equate sort of the digital thing, but it's a fair point. Are there any plans to remove the fees? Are there any...?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Not contemplated within this budget. They're all just status quo.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Financial and Consumer Services:
2,442,200

Shall it carry? Carried.

Legal and Legislative Services

“Appropriations provided for legal services to government, its Ministers and officials, and for legislative drafting services.” Administration: 44,2100. Equipment: 3,000. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 82,700. Professional Services: 8,000. Salaries: 3,110,900. Travel and Training: 12,100. Grants: 10,000.

Total Legal and Legislative Services: 3,270,900

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Is there a percentage of how often we use external legal services versus internal legal services? Because it's a pretty sizable section of the budget. Would it be fair to say that most of the work done in this section is done internally and seldom farmed out?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I wouldn't have the exact breakdown. I know we try to keep it internal as much as possible, but if there are conflicts or specific security – I might have the wrong.... There is a type of file that would typically go external.

M. MacFarlane: Is there a policy around that for when that goes out and when it might need to go out versus stay in?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: There is an external legal counsel policy. I'm not sure of the exact

wording on it, but there is a policy that government will follow. We are an essential service for government, but each department would have their own legal budget as well. So, we wouldn't carry the budget for a different department, only the people within our legal services team.

[2:40 p.m.]

M. MacFarlane: I think my last question would be, I know when we have Blair on the floor and bringing forward some new acts, we often reference the Uniform Law Conference. Is there anything contemplated now that's being reviewed further to uniform law drafts?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Not that I'm aware of.

Hon. B. Thompson: I'm sure Blair is working on many.

M. MacFarlane: No question about that.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Emergency Management Organization

Emergency Management Organization

"Appropriations to provide support and guidance to Provincial officials, municipal governments, and the public to prepare for, respond to, and recover from non-routine emergencies. This includes the administration of the provincial 911 program." Administration: 24,300. Equipment: 13,200. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 2,334,200. Professional Services: 1,530,400. Salaries: 1,305,600. Travel and Training: 30,500. Grants: 100,000.

Total Emergency Management Organization:
5,338,200

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Looking at the grants line, what was underspent on the grants line?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We had the fuel station program to set up generators. They were approved two fiscal years ago, but it's taken this long to get them all installed. So, an accounting term – we accrued it back a couple years ago, and this is just kind of a true-up. We were underspent this year because we had been accruing based on approved grant applications, but a company might have said they were going

to spend \$46,000 and they spent \$30,000. So, we just had some differences there.

M. MacFarlane: So, budgeting down from \$140,000 to \$100,000 isn't going to result in anything being cut or anything sacrificed?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: No, we have \$50,000 in that \$100,000 set aside for PEI Ground Search and Rescue, and then we just had another \$90,000 previous – it will be \$50,000 this year – for community grants that might come up. So, it would be an application-type process and not something that is an annual commitment.

M. MacFarlane: So, Ground Search and Rescue received \$83,000. Did I hear you correctly that it's \$50,000?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: It is \$50,000. Last year there was a one-time training and equipment grant, so they asked for some additional money last year. We were able to use some of our other budget to offset that.

M. MacFarlane: And as far as the materials and services line, which is a heavy line, what's the bulk that goes into this section on the materials, supplies, and services?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We have about \$2.2 million in there for our monthly operating contract with Bell for our PICS2 radios.

M. MacFarlane: Is that annual expense? It costs that much year over year over year to...?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: It does.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. So, is that the call answer/transfer service that's referenced? There's \$1 million that went to that.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: No, that's for our 911 centre that Medacom provides the call answer service for.

M. MacFarlane: So, two totally different, separate-function things that combine/add up to over \$3 million?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Correct.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. And what is the funding for 911 modernization?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: The wording might be a little bit different on there. We just did a review

of the 911 office, so looking at modernizing it. It hasn't really been reviewed in several years – many years, I would say. Next Generation 911 is coming out, so there will be some changes that have to come. It was just kind of a review to see if we're in line now and what changes to anticipate coming up.

M. MacFarlane: So, just on that next gen 911 – that's not budgeted for implementation or anything to do with implementation in this year's budget?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: It's in our capital. That's a capital one as well.

M. MacFarlane: Maybe, then, just an overarching question – I know I probably asked it last year. I'll ask it again: With climate change, is there anything in the budget to either plan for or mitigate emergency demands/services needed further to increased climate change? Is there any sort of ongoing strategy or plan that's being funded?

[2:45 p.m.]

Hon. B. Thompson: That's the whole operating budget of the emergency measures office – to deal with that.

M. MacFarlane: Look at it from that lens?

Hon. B. Thompson: (Indistinct)

Chair: Shall the section carry?

Public Safety and Policing

Public Safety

“Appropriations provided for the Office of Public Safety, Fire Marshal's Office, Firearms Office, Conservation and Enforcement, and the Office of the Police Commissioner, including administration of the RCMP.” Administration: 32,400. Equipment: 38,900. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 69,200. Professional Services: 28,484,400. Salaries: 2,871,400. Travel and Training: 147,500. Grants: Office of the Police Commissioner: 144,000. Other: 1,281,100.

Total Public Safety: 33,068,900

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

The policing services line is getting a bump up, about \$1 million if I'm looking at it right. Where did that number come from? Have there been negotiations with the different services to land at that number?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We just fund RCMP within our budget. They're our provincial police force. That line would be specific to the RCMP. They have about 200 staff with their own collective agreement, so their collective agreement increases are built into that as well as their operational costs.

M. MacFarlane: No, it's an interesting funding arrangement. Did they come to us and say they needed that \$1 million increase to deliver a certain level of services or to hire new staff? Because I'm wondering what that discussion looked like to land on that number.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Every June, they present us with a five-year plan of where they think their cost will be for that cycle. So, we have that number. We'll be getting that number for next year in a couple of weeks. They kind of go through and say here is our status quo, if we just want to continue operating at this, this is what it's going to cost. And then they present different business cases if they want to increase their number of members.

So, those are kind of done in the same document but separately. This is actually a little bit less than what they had asked for, for status quo, but were able to find some savings with them. So, it was definitely work back and forth with them to come up with a number.

M. MacFarlane: Can you explain a bit more about the coverage that this provides? There are some municipalities who also don't have their own municipal police service. They will contribute to the cost of RCMP patrol within their jurisdictions. If I'm offside on any of this, jump in and correct me, but what area of the province does this contribution does this include and not include?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: It covers all of the province with the exception of Charlottetown, Summerside, and Kensington, who have their own police services. Those are municipal funded. There are seven municipalities that have an extended service agreement with us, so they would pay an equivalent to one officer.

M. MacFarlane: Those seven municipalities only contribute to the Province, the equivalent to the cost of one officer.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: One RCMP officer, yes.

M. MacFarlane: I know other provinces have a slightly different model. There are regional police services in Ontario, the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary. Here, we've got a bit of an amalgam of municipal services in Kensington, Summerside, and Charlottetown with RCMP filling in the rest.

Tied to the budget, is there any money in the budget for a planning to do a review? Lots of reviews being done. Would this be something that could be reviewed to see if there's alternative delivery models to what's currently being deployed for police services across our province, recognizing that other provinces and regions of Ontario do it differently?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I'm just going to correct myself. Stratford and Cornwall have their own contract with the RCMP, so that's not funded through here; I do want to correct myself there.

[2:50 p.m.]

No specific reviews on different models at this point. The RCMP contract goes until 2032 so we do have some time to establish if that's where we want to continue going, which, at this point, I believe would probably be the preferred option. Just cost – I know it is a lot of money, but it's more cost-effective. You can tap into national training standards and national services that they have that would be very expensive for the Province to stand up.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Hi, good to see you.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: You too.

P. Bevan-Baker: I'm going to follow on a little bit from the Leader of the Third Party's questions, but in this section, also, this is where enforcement on impaired driving would sit. Is that correct? I know the Chair, not only of the Committee of the Whole but also of the standing committee, we had lots of discussions on immediate roadside prohibitions.

I'm wondering whether there is any funding set aside here for further – we sort of ended up at a.... There were differing views, let me put it that way, that we heard from –

Hon. B. Thompson: Kind of at a crossroads there, weren't we?

P. Bevan-Baker: I'm sorry?

Hon. B. Thompson: We hit crossroads.

P. Bevan-Baker: Well, yeah, maybe we did.

I'm just wondering whether there's any funding set aside in this section for government to do some more background work before we commit or not commit to that.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We had money in our policy/FPT relations. I mentioned that we had reduced some of the budget for there. There's still about \$60,000 tied for impaired initiatives, so it could potentially come under that. Within RCMP itself, there's a traffic unit built in there, so they're the ones that are out on the roads doing the roadside checks. That's kind of their provincial priority, I would say, is to keep those in line.

P. Bevan-Baker: Did I hear you say that \$60,000 is what's set aside on this?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I believe, it's \$60,000, yeah.

P. Bevan-Baker: That's really not a lot of money.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: It was in a previous section. Yeah, \$60,000.

P. Bevan-Baker: That money, small though it is, there's some flexibility as to where that could be spent. Are you saying that perhaps in the FPT area, whether or not we adopt IRP, would that be something that we would discuss with other – with the feds, for example – or do we not have jurisdiction to that ourselves?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We did have an agreement with the feds around impaired driving. They haven't come back to the table since that money.... It was done two years ago; I'm going to say two years ago. There haven't been any specific conversations that I'm aware of. That money – it's in a grant line, so it's a

little bit flexible. As we move through the year, we can determine what the best use is for it.

P. Bevan-Baker: I'll move on from that, but I appreciate the discussion.

I see in the grants section, again, for this, there's a gun and gang violence actions funding. It's quite a lot of money: about ten times what we were just talking about, \$634,000. I'm wondering what successes they have had with that expenditure, if any.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: It is a federal agreement, so it's completely offset by federal revenue. I guess a success this year would be some of the money went towards our joint enforcement team, our JET team. That's a few different police – sorry. [Laughter] Seeing the (Indistinct) means we're good. Summerside, Kensington, and RCMP are working together on some initiatives there.

P. Bevan-Baker: I think I heard you say, and I saw the minister sort of indicate perhaps that the JET funding is coming from this gun and gang violence budget. Is that correct?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: There's some from this and then there is some within our base budget as well, provincial budget.

P. Bevan-Baker: Last year, if I remember right, there was a grant for Safe Grads in this section, but I don't see it, or maybe it's been moved to another section. Is that gone or is it somewhere else?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: No, it didn't happen again this year. I'm not sure exactly. I think it was a request we had last year from a fellow department. I'm not sure if it happened again this year or what happened there.

P. Bevan-Baker: But there is no funding then?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: No, there was none this year, no.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Chair.

Sorry about that, to distract (Indistinct) –

Bobbi Lawlor-White: No, that's okay.
[Laughter]

[2:55 p.m.]

C. Simpson: My question is: For the fire departments – and most of our firefighters are volunteer – just wondering if there's any budgeting in here to increase the number of paid fire people that are at fire departments. Is that a consideration at all?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That's not within our budget, no. This is just our fire marshal office specifically.

Hon. B. Thompson: That would be the City of Charlottetown's budget.

C. Simpson: I'm sorry, minister?

Hon. B. Thompson: That would be the City of Charlottetown.

C. Simpson: Okay, thank you.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Municipal, yeah.

Chair: Hon. Leader of the Third Party, do you have more questions on this section?

M. MacFarlane: I might just have a couple. Thank you, Chair.

I know that Crime Stoppers has been seeking funding from municipalities. Is there anything in the budget other than the \$10,000? I see operating grant; is that the contribution to Crime Stoppers?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That would be our base contribution to them, the \$10,000. I know the previous year, I believe, they asked for – they had a separate initiative. So, if they come and ask for specific initiatives and they fit within our priorities, then we would look at funding those.

M. MacFarlane: And moving through the documents, the mobile mental health units, is that funding included here as well?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: No, we don't have any funding in our department for that.

M. MacFarlane: I guess other than what might go to the police through other – the police would have a role to play, obviously, in the mobile mental health units, so their funding would already be captured in the funding they get broadly speaking?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I believe it's funded through Health and Wellness.

M. MacFarlane: Oh, okay. And the Office of the Police Commissioner is included in this section. Is that a full-time office or a part-time? Do we know how many hours...?

Hon. B. Thompson: It's part time.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I believe it's part time; I don't know if I have the specifics on how many hours.

Hon. B. Thompson: Cindy Wedge is the commissioner.

M. MacFarlane: Is there other staff other than Ms. Wedge in that office? Does she have support?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I believe there's one other. I don't know how many hours they would have though.

Chair: Last one, hon. Leader of the Third Party, and then I can put you back on the list if you so choose.

M. MacFarlane: Sure. No, I think this will probably do it for me. I just have a question or two, Chair, on the – I think it's included in this section, or maybe it's not. I think it's the next section actually, Chair.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Provincial Coroner Services

“Appropriations provided for coroner services throughout the Province.” Administration: 2,000. Equipment: 3,000. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 11,500. Professional Services: 804,800. Salaries: 100,700. Travel and Training: 7,900.

Total Provincial Coroner Services: 929,900.

The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

R. Henderson: With your professional services, I'm assuming this is a coroner and doctor that are not on all the time; they just go to basically calls. So, you spent \$200,000 more last year; you're going back. What would be the reasoning why you think there'll be less need for coroner services?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: It's not necessarily that there's less of a need. The office is going through a modernization process, and we're kind of working through the budget process as well. So, I anticipate next year we'll probably see an increase there. We just need to have some bodies to work through that. So, there is a position in budget – we were just approved for that one – so that will help inform the budget for next year.

R. Henderson: So, there are vacancies now and you don't have enough coroners, is what you're saying?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: No, sorry, there's a program coordinator position, not specifically a coroner.

R. Henderson: Okay. So then, under salaries you have \$100,000 you didn't – so that's another person?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That's the person I'm speaking of, sorry.

R. Henderson: Okay, I'm going to go back then to professional services. That is actually coroners who actually go out and do the work, and there are doctors and other duties or whatever, and they get paid basically on a fee-for-service basis, is that the way I understand it? I guess my point is, though, you're still \$200,000 less than what you're projecting. So, that would seem to me you think there'll be less reasons for a coroner for the coming year.

[3:00 p.m.]

Bobbi Lawlor-White: For coroner or for...?

R. Henderson: Well, we're getting confused between professional services and salaries. I think you've clarified the salaries issue, that there's an additional person there that's going to be back doing duties there. But if I go back to the professional services, you spent \$1 million approximately last year for coroner services. You're budgeting for this coming year \$804,000, which is what was budgeted last year. It would seem to me there's \$200,000 less, which would tell me that you're saying that there's not going to be as many requirements for coroner services.

That's where I see that there's a problem, that your budget –

Hon. B. Thompson: I hope not. I certainly hope not. [Laughter]

Bobbi Lawlor-White: You're right. We have one chief coroner that is paid not a salary but one set amount each year, and then the other ones are fee for service. It's all dependent on how many people require the service.

R. Henderson: But I go back to saying it just seems like you're budgeting \$200,000 less here. I would find it hard to believe that there would be less services than last year, or if there are, I would like an explanation to why there would be. Why wouldn't you have, say, \$1 million in that budget?

I mean, I'm not saying you have to be bang on in this, and I understand that. It just seems like \$200,000 for that service is – I would call it a cut.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: And within that is also the transportation costs, so moving the bodies as well. So, it's not just coroner in there. The coroner itself – we do have money set aside. There are autopsy fees, lab fees. Again, it's very dependent on the number. I understand where you're coming from, but....

R. Henderson: I can only assume that travel costs are even going to go higher for the coming year. I guess I'm making my point, and you're agreeing with my point, but it stands out as a \$200,000 discrepancy that you're probably going to wind up having to do a special warrant for at some point. So, I just want that to be noted.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Well, this also is within our public safety division, so we may be forecasting over in the budget here; we may find the savings elsewhere within public safety or elsewhere within the department as a whole. That's kind of what my job is, to try to find where those savings are. [Laughter]

R. Henderson: And you're probably quite good at it, so thanks.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Thank you.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Chair.

Maybe just to back up what O'Leary-Inverness was just chatting about, is there an identified trend in the number of services that require a coroner over the years? Is it going up or down, or is it pretty stable?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I did see some preliminary stats. There's maybe a slight increase. It's kind of similar, though, the last few years, so we're trying to refine. Again, once we get that position in place, then we'll be able to kind of dig into it a little bit further, and then we'll use those trends to help inform our budget asks in the future.

P. Bevan-Baker: Just to sort it out in my own mind here – I see the salary line is zero for this year and over \$100,000 (Indistinct). You mentioned that we do have a coroner, and they're paid, but not from this section presumably. That's somewhere else. Is that correct?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yeah, that sits at professional service. So, this would be a government employee or a program coordinator. Currently right now, our chief coroner is doing administrative work. We're paying a doctor to do admin work, so we're trying to fill this position. We just received authorization last week/this week that we can proceed with that position. So, just took a little bit of time to get it sorted through the process.

P. Bevan-Baker: Right, okay. Again – and I was trying to listen to the conversation – maybe I missed this. So, the savings that you're anticipating is that we're now paying a coroner, a doctor, to do administrative work presumably at a pretty high cost per hour, and in hiring this "coordinator," I think was the word you used – is that right? – some of those costs of administration will be taken away from the costs that we're currently paying the coroner and make a....

Hon. B. Thompson: Efficiencies. Efficiencies and savings. That's what we're aiming for.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay. That's all I have for this section. Thank you.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Public Safety and Policing: 33,998,800

Shall it carry? Carried.

Alright, for those following along, we are now on page 128.

Legal Aid

Legal Aid

[3:05 p.m.]

“Appropriations provided for criminal and family legal services to eligible persons.”
Administration: 57,300. Equipment: 4,300.
Materials, Supplies, and Services: 8,000.
Professional Services: 354,700. Salaries:
2,504,700. Travel and Training: 15,600.

Total Legal Aid: 2,944,600

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

Just looking at the overall budget for the section; it doesn't look like there's anything really being increased. The salaries line is probably just a cost of living adjustment on the salaries line, but I'll get you to confirm if you could if there are any new hires to support the legal aid program.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: No new positions in budget, but they have been doing a great job of filling their positions. So, new positions, but not actually new in budget – just getting people in seats.

M. MacFarlane: Are all the positions filled at present?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: There are a couple vacancies still. I know they were doing some hiring, I want to say within the last month. I don't know the status on that though.

Hon. B. Thompson: What are you doing this summer?

M. MacFarlane: Could be looking for work; you never know.

[Laughter]

The eligibility requirements is always an issue that comes up, and I like to ask if there have been any changes to increase the eligibility for those who are seeking legal aid services.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: The scale was reviewed and last revised in 2024, so there haven't been any updates since then.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. When you say the scale, you mean the income thresholds for those who would be able to be caught within the eligibility? That's what was changed in 2024?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Exactly.

M. MacFarlane: When would it be updated again?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That's a question I don't know. I think it would be reviewed every few years, I would say, but don't know exactly.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. I just wasn't sure if there was regular review for that.

How much money do we get from the federal government to support our provincial legal aid program?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: For this fiscal year, it will be \$645,000. The previous year, it was \$662,000.

Hon. B. Thompson: (Indistinct) a cut.

M. MacFarlane: Sounds like it. I guess....

Bobbi Lawlor-White: But actually, they increased it going forward. They just offered us an extension for two years.

Hon. B. Thompson: Work with me here, Bobbi.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Oh, sorry.

[Laughter]

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I was like: “No cuts. No cuts.”

M. MacFarlane: I'm not sure which answer I like better. It's hard to know....

Hon. B. Thompson: Cut/reduction....

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That's less helpful, sorry.

M. MacFarlane: So, what is the funding percentage based on? It seems like it's a little up and down. Is it tied to numbers of some sort – numbers of eligible applicants?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: No, it is a set amount each year. There's a big formula behind it. I don't know if I could get into explaining it, to be honest, but it's about this long.

M. MacFarlane: But it's something that we can rely on? We're not going to have the rug pulled out from underneath us such that it would jeopardize the delivery of the service?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: No, as I just mentioned, they just offered a two-year extension. It was set to expire in 2027, but they did come back to the table with just a two-year extension for now.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. I know we talked about the legal aid clinic a few sections ago, and now the legal aid, which is family and criminal exclusively. Are there any budgeted funds contemplated to either expand the services offered through this legal aid program, or is the department's intention to look at the services being delivered...?

Hon. B. Thompson: We hired a vulnerable persons lawyer. Molly Murphy is that person.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. When was the position filled with Ms. Murphy?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't have the date. I know it's been probably six months – around that timeframe. I don't know exactly, but that seems....

[3:10 p.m.]

M. MacFarlane: Okay. So, just to finish that other question I was trying to articulate. We're keeping the legal aid parameters with the department for criminal and family services to eligible persons. We now have the separate clinic that's just going to get rolling – I think you said in July, to stand up. Is it the intention of the department just to monitor the services being delivered through that clinic and offer supports to the community legal – used to be CLIA – and see how that's working?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: The community legal clinic itself will operate independent of government. Legal Aid will still stay as is; there are no anticipated changes within Legal Aid itself.

M. MacFarlane: Okay, that's fine.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Crown Attorneys

“Appropriations provided for the Crown Attorneys' office to represent the Attorney General in all aspects of their provincial prosecutorial function.” Administration: 41,100. Equipment: 2,200. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 22,900. Professional Services: 19,300. Salaries: 2,187,500. Travel and Training: 24,100.

Total Crown Attorneys: 2,297,100

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

I guess I'm always wondering about the necessary supports to both the Legal Aid side and the Crown prosecutorial side. Is there data kept on cases brought forward through our Crown attorney's office?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I do have numbers for '24-25. There were 5,300 provincial criminal charge offenses.

M. MacFarlane: How does that compare – you probably don't have historical trend data.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't. I know they do see typical growth each year as population increases.

M. MacFarlane: I guess if there is growth each year, have there been any requests for additional appropriations from the Crown's office to maintain the ability to deliver on that growth?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I mean, they always want more lawyers but.... They do have vacancies as well; it's kind of just a matter of filling the positions and getting people in there for longer term but nothing new yet.

M. MacFarlane: Are the vacancies lawyer positions or...?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yes. I know they were doing some hiring. I don't know exactly which positions but I know there was some hiring happening recently as well.

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

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Community and Correctional Services

Division Management

“Appropriations provided for the division's administrative functions.” Administration: 14,900. Equipment: 1,500. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 10,100. Professional Services: Nil. Salaries: 1,404,200. Travel and Training: 47,900.

Total Division Management: 1,478,600

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks.

I suspect this is in the wrong section but if I look between the books here I see for professional contract services, under community and correctional services, there's a number there but quite a lot of services with prices attached, but I see under professional services here there's nothing listed. I'm looking, for example, at the monitoring service in installation and security services. This is almost half a million dollars, but which section would that be under?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That's under electronic supervision; that's coming up.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

I don't have any questions for this section, then.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Custody Programs

” Appropriations provided for operation of the Provincial Correctional Centre, Prince County Correctional Centre, and PEI Youth Centre.” Administration: 45,900. Equipment: 55,900. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 1,700,200. Professional Services: 28,800. Salaries: 16,629,100. Travel and Training: 65,800.

Total Custody Programs: 18,525,700

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Chair.

I think the new women's provincial correctional centre in Summerside is open. My first question is: How is that going?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That one is in our Charlottetown location, but it seems to be operating well. I haven't heard any issues there. There's definitely some bed days and it's getting used.

[3:15 p.m.]

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay. On that note, how much of the adult correctional centre budget is dedicated to women as opposed to men, as opposed to youth? Do you have those numbers?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: The youth centre we do have a separate budget for. The women's is just kind of within our Provincial Correctional Centre section. So, the youth centre itself would be a little over \$3 million of that total number that we just were looking at of \$18 million. But again, the women's unit, we would have some staffing breakout there, but I wouldn't have the stats specifically on amounts there.

P. Bevan-Baker: And again, just to your first comment around the capacity; how full are there correctional centres? Again, whether it's male or female or youth.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yes, last year, so just the two adult correctional centres, we had about 83 percent utilization rate, 48,000 bed days, and the youth centre was about 17 percent utilization rate, or 500 bed days.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay. Again, just for my own interest, is the trend going up or down on that?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: For the adult it's going up. Yeah, since 2021, it's gone up about 16,000 bed days, or approximately 44 per day.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay, I'm good for this section. Thanks.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you very much.

Just some questions on Sleepy Hollow. How are we doing for staffing in that location? I've just heard some of the staff might be a little bit stressed out because of various concerns. Are we

at full staffing there? Are we constantly fighting an uphill battle there?

Hon. B. Thompson: It's a professional correctional centre, not Sleepy Hollow; that's a nick name.

G. McNeilly: I thought it might be in the wrong section, the Provincial Correctional Centre, minister.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: There are challenges there, as I mentioned the bed days are increasing substantially. So, we did add 9.3 FTEs to the budget this year, so I mean that'll help a bit. That'll help with some lines, but we are unfortunately the increase is there.

We're hoping with the bail supervision program, some people that are in correctional facilities on remand will be released into community with proper supervision, so that will help that demand within the correctional facilities.

G. McNeilly: Okay, perfect. I'm glad to hear we added 9.3 FTEs.

Something I heard, too, is when somebody has to leave the correctional facility to go to a medical appointment, it takes the staff out of that and it puts stress on the staff and it can be for – and when they go into the hospital or whatever, I can be a very long wait. Are you hearing the same thing? What can we do differently? How do we get around this so that it's not such a burden on their duties?

Hon. B. Thompson: This only happens in certain cases, because there is a nurse in the correctional centre. We have, I think, two nurses. So, on the odd chance that this happens, it does put stress, because it's two correctional officers in the hospital waiting as well, and it puts pressure on the hospital as well.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: And we do have just a little over three nurse FTEs and then the equivalent of two FTE LPNs within the provincial correctional centre in Charlottetown, then there's one or two in the Summerside location.

G. McNeilly: And I would assume that the FTEs are fully staffed, and I don't want to waste a question on that because I'm just trying to do this quickly.

I just want to say a big shoutout to the staff members that work in corrections; they have a really stressful job. That's just some of the things that we're hearing, and if I ask these questions, they're just in support of what you're doing and in support of them and I'll just talk to the minister too as concerns come forward, but I'm quite worried about them and the hard work that they do. So, I just wanted to say that.

Thank you.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Chair.

[3:20 p.m.]

You had mentioned that the use of beds is up. At the PCC, is that consistent across the Prince County Correctional Centre and the youth centre as well?

Hon. B. Thompson: The youth centre is 17 percent, so it's down.

C. Simpson: It's down?

Hon. B. Thompson: Yeah.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: The youth centre itself is down. The Prince County correctional facility, it is seeing an increase as well. Not as drastic, but it just has less beds there as well.

C. Simpson: When that happens, do either of the facilities ever reach a point where beds are at capacity? If so, how do you support people?

Hon. B. Thompson: The odd time, it does reach capacity. It's probably the importance of the bail supervision that we're bringing in that will help. The clients that are on remand, we can release them safely into the community, and that way open up space.

C. Simpson: I'm good with that for now. Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Community Programs

“Appropriations provided for probation services throughout the province as well as early intervention and supports to young people in conflict with the law by providing services such

as Youth Probation, Community Youth Worker, Student Well-being, and Youth Intervention Outreach Programs.” Administration: 32,900. Equipment: 9,000. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 19,700. Professional Services: 9,200. Salaries: 5,492,900. Travel and Training: 165,800.

Total Community Programs: 5,729,500

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

The student well-being teams are here. I should know this by now, but I don’t. Is all the funding for the student well-being teams through Justice, or is there a component that’s also Education?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I believe there’s also Education. We have 20 within our department and division.

K. Bernard: The Chair just said, “And Health, too.” That’s right.

That list of positions – I was trying to find that. Is it under youth justice services?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: It would be, yes.

K. Bernard: Yeah, okay. Would they be stationed with Justice but go into the school system as needed?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That’s right.

K. Bernard: Is it just the positions that are funded through this or are there other things that may be funded?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: There would be some operating costs and administrative costs. If they have programs they run, those types of costs would be funded within that youth justice service section itself.

K. Bernard: Am I in the wrong section, then, to ask more about them?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: No, right in here.

K. Bernard: Do you have a line item attached to student well-being teams or is it kind of a different spot?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yeah, it’s just embedded within this total budget. Overall, our youth justice service budget is \$3.7 million. Those positions would be embedded in that.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks.

How many Islanders are currently on probation?

While you’re looking that up, I’m just wondering – again, similar to my previous questions – if that’s a relatively constant number or whether it’s going up or down.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: This is as of April 14th, so, not current but a little bit current.

P. Bevan-Baker: Oh, pretty close.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yeah. There were 1,040 active probation cases. The previous year – it was to February – there was about 900, give or take. Close, but....

P. Bevan-Baker: I notice that there’s mention of youth probation here specifically, in the description of the division. I’m wondering if there’s any age limit below which somebody cannot be put on probation. I’m not really explaining that very well.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I know what you’re saying, but I don’t have that stat specifically.

P. Bevan-Baker: Sorry, maybe I didn’t ask it well. Not so much how many, but if there’s an actual age limit below which you cannot be put on probation.

[3:25 p.m.]

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That I don’t know.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay. I see that the youth workers and – well, the student well-being teams, we’ve already talked about that. The youth intervention outreach programs are also in this division. Can you give us sort of an overview – I understand where the student well-being teams are in the schools, but the other ones presumably work more in the community, is that correct?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yes, the youth intervention outreach program would be a community-based service.

Chair: Hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point, one more and I'll put you back on the list.

P. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, no, I'm not sure I have any more questions, actually, Chair. I think I'm good for this section.

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

C. Simpson: I'm wondering if you can just.... The youth intervention outreach program – I understand what happens here, but I'm wondering if you can tell us what the cutoff date of age for youth is? Like, do you max out at 18, 21, 25, 29?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't know that, sorry. I just have the budget.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, minister. Okay, I'm good. Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Electronic Supervision

"Appropriations provided for electronic monitoring throughout the province."
Administration: 2,500. Equipment: 1,500.
Materials, Supplies, and Services: 1,600.
Professional Services: 338,600. Salaries: 389,300. Travel and Training: 8,500.

Total Electronic Supervision: 742,000

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Chair.

Just curious here with the budget coming. It was up from the year previous, but it's down considerably this year. So, are we thinking that fewer people will require – which would be a good thing – this sort of surveillance? Is that the...?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: No, we have a new vendor that's providing the ankle monitoring service, so the price is lower. We went out for RFP and –

Hon. B. Thompson: Efficiencies and savings.

C. Simpson: (Indistinct), minister.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: So, that's why.

C. Simpson: Okay. I'm good.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Chair.

This is where I had the number earlier and wasn't sure which section it was in. Last year, I see the monitoring service and installation – that's the ankle bracelets, I'm assuming you're talking – it was \$414,000, and the number this year, as the member who spoke previously said, has gone down.

I presume there were other costs because it was \$515,000 in total last year, so there must have been other costs elsewhere. But how much of a saving are we getting by changing vendor? I'm assuming it's great.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't have the exact cost. Part of the changeover last year though, we had an additional \$50,000 for a threat risk assessment because we had a new vendor, so there was an extra \$50,000 last year that you're seeing. But I don't know the exact cost for cost.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay. This is more a process thing, so I'm not sure, Chair, if you'll be comfortable with this, but it's where the decision to – somebody who's on probation to wear an ankle bracelet. Does that lie entirely with the courts, who is eligible for them or not?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: It's predominantly the court, ordered by the judge, but the probation officers can also elect to put a client on electric supervision. But predominantly, it is a judge order.

P. Bevan-Baker: I think my final one, similar to my last question on youth probation: Are there any age limits below which somebody cannot be fitted with an ankle bracelet?

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Don't know. Okay. Alright, I'm good. Thanks.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Victim Services

“Appropriations provided for services to victims of crime.” Administration: 10,500. Equipment: 5,500. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 19,600. Professional Services: 65,100. Salaries: 1,753,900. Travel and Training: 35,700. Grants: 125,000.

Total Victim Services: 2,015,300

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks.

I see the salary line is going up here, and I’m just wondering how many staff there are in victim services.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We have 16 FTEs, which some would be admin as well.

[3:30 p.m.]

P. Bevan-Baker: Sure. And what’s the average caseload for somebody who’s working in victim services?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: As of year-end, the average caseload was a little over 100 cases per victim service worker.

P. Bevan-Baker: I see last year that there was an overspend on grants. I think that’s compensation to victims, is that correct?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That’s correct.

P. Bevan-Baker: I see you’ve gone back down again, but would we expect that increased level of compensation to go away again? Was there a special reason why it was higher this year, I guess is what I’m asking?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I think it’s just one of those ones. It’s hard to predict what it will be. I think the trend has been a little bit higher than what we have in budget, but again, it’s part of a bigger division where we try to manage that within overall.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thank you. I’m good for this section. Thanks, Chair.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clinical Services

“Appropriations provided for assessment, risk management, and delivery of treatment programs to youth and adult offenders, both institutional and community-based, who are serving Federal or Provincial sentences.” Administration: 16,000. Equipment: 2,000. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 28,900. Professional Services: 41,000. Salaries: 1,309,000. Travel and Training: 38,700.

Total Clinical Services: 1,435,600

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Chair.

I’m just wondering what sorts of services we’re talking about. Are these social services or health services predominantly, or is it a mixture of both?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Programs assist, support, and treat individuals experiencing significant personal difficulties associated with criminal activity. The programs include emotional regulation, sexual offence treatment and assessment, Turning Point, and an intimate partner violence program for men.

P. Bevan-Baker: Do you know if there’s a waitlist for these services, Bobbi, or are they readily available?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I’m not sure on the waitlist, to be honest. I don’t have that in any of my notes.

P. Bevan-Baker: Final question for this section: Is this a cost-shared expense with the feds or do we shoulder the whole cost ourselves?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We do have \$300,000 in budget in revenue that’s a federal contribution.

P. Bevan-Baker: That’s a transfer, okay.

That’s great. I’m good. Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Community and Correctional Services: 29,926,700

Shall it carry? Carried.

We're on page 130.

Family Law, Court Services, and Access to Privacy Services Office

Division Management

"Appropriations provided for management of the Family and Court Services Division, including the Office of the Children's Lawyer."

Administration: 18,600. Equipment: 2,000. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 1,500. Professional Services: 103,600. Salaries: 847,800. Travel and Training: 7,300.

Total Division Management: 980,800

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Chair.

I'm wondering if you can tell us how many children's lawyers there now are?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We have three.

C. Simpson: Are those full-time equivalents?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We have two full-time equivalents, yes.

C. Simpson: Two full-time – filled by three positions. Okay, thank you.

Do you have an indication there on their caseloads?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't actually have stats on that.

C. Simpson: Minister, do you mind bringing that back?

Hon. B. Thompson: Sure.

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

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks.

I see there's quite an overspend on professional services here. I'm wondering what that is.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Mostly, it is for Office of the Children's Lawyer files.

P. Bevan-Baker: I see that the estimate for this year is for that to come back to what it was last year. That was just a blip this year, is that what you're saying?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I believe there was a temporary vacancy. I'm not sure if somebody retired or – there was a vacancy in there, so they would have had to outsource a little bit more of the files.

[3:35 p.m.]

P. Bevan-Baker: Related to the salaries, two FTEs but three individuals who are filling those two FTEs, but I see that the salary expenses were, again, almost half a million more than anticipated last year.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We have some temporary staff within the finance side of things, so they've moved into positions into this year. So, we don't anticipate that additional cost that we had last year, if that makes sense.

P. Bevan-Baker: It does; you preempted my last question.

I'm good for this section. Thanks, Chair.

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

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just looking under the professional and contract services, and there's a consulting service here for parenting skills. I'm wondering if that's a specific program.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That might be under family law.

K. Bernard: It's in the big book. Oh, am I in the wrong thing?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I think it's under the family law section, but it would be a program that's run within this division overall.

K. Bernard: Okay. In this...? Am I...?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Not in this section, but within the division.

K. Bernard: Is it in an upcoming section?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I believe it's in family law; it's coming up.

K. Bernard: I'm sorry. I keep missing (Indistinct)

Okay, I'll hold that.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Office of the Public Trustee and Official Public Guardian

"Appropriations provided for administration of the Public Trustee Act and provisions of the Mental Health Act where there is a need for guardianship." Administration: 9,600. Equipment: 4,500. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 3,300. Salaries: 885,700. Travel and Training: 4,500.

Total Office of the Public Trustee and Official Public Guardian: 907,600

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Chair.

Mainly because I just had some personal experience – sort of secondhand – with this office for the first time last year and was interested in how it runs....

What's the sort of caseload that the public trustee office would have to deal with in any year?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't have a per-staff one, but they have public trustee and public guardian clients, there are 78. Public guardian only were 20; public trustee only was 229; and OG, which would be office of the guardian, would be 60.

P. Bevan-Baker: Alright. Do we have any sense of the assets that are held under management by the public trustee and/or the public guardian?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yeah. As of the end of last fiscal year, it was about \$16.6 million. Sorry, not fiscal year; they run calendar year. Apologies. So, the end of December.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

I'm good for this section. Thanks, Chair.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Family Law

"Appropriations provided for delivery of services in the area of Family Law and Child Support." Administration: 27,600. Equipment: 18,000. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 151,700. Professional Services: 81,300. Salaries: 2,293,800. Travel and Training: 32,100.

Total Family Law: 2,604,500

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

So, this is where the funding for the parenting program is, and I think I heard the minister say Positive Parenting from Two Homes. Is that the program that this is, or is it more than one program?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: It could be various. That is one that we do have in the section.

K. Bernard: I don't have last year's books in front of me for that. Is that funding stable from last year?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We don't necessarily budget by the different programs; it's just kind of the overall.... There is a reduction here. Federal funding ended for two specific ones: Supervised Parenting Time and Exchange is one, so you'll see some reductions in the budget for that. The feds came back to the table after our budget was finalized to renew that agreement. So, it is out of our budget right now. We'll be going through the process of adding that back in.

K. Bernard: I'm wondering – I know we had an exchange during Question Period over maintenance enforcement the other day, and that's somewhere that I have some major concerns given that it impacts single Island parents; it tends to mostly be women.

[3:40 p.m.]

I have a couple of questions on this, but is the maintenance enforcement program fully staffed?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yeah. According to this, it is. This is at a point in time – it probably would have been a month or two ago at this point – but as far as I know, yes.

K. Bernard: I remember the last time we had this conversation and it wasn't fully staffed. That was kind of what we thought might be an issue, but I'm hearing now, even with the fully staffed complement, that they're still behind in certain things. Is there any plan to hire more people for maintenance enforcement?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Not within this budget. I will note the AG's office is doing a program evaluation – I don't know if evaluation is the right word; audit, I guess – of the maintenance enforcement program. We'll be looking for their recommendations on that and be able to use that going forward.

K. Bernard: I hope because I know that program is just – it's not effective. It's just not.

In 2024, it was \$12 million in payments in arrears. Do you have an update on that figure?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yes, we did pull that. At year end – March 31st – it was almost \$12 million, and as of May 14th, it was \$11.8 million. So, down a little bit.

K. Bernard: So, there's another audit being done, but there was one done not that long ago, was there not?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: There was. I'm not sure of the timing on that, but this one's been ongoing for almost a year, I want to say. They're getting close to the final stages on it.

K. Bernard: I guess I was going to ask about recommendations from that last report – if there were still some left to be done – but I guess even if there was work being done, it's probably paused until the audit.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't have an update on the old one, for sure, but I know there is the new one ongoing.

K. Bernard: Okay. I guess this makes my last question kind of a moot point because I was just – actually, just wait.

Do you have a number of how many children or families are on the maintenance enforcement program?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I just have – again, this is as of May 14th; there were 1,400 active files. I don't know exactly the breakdown of that, just the number of files.

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

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Court and Shared Services

“Appropriations provided for administrative services to the Courts in the province and for sheriff services to the public, the Courts, and other Government departments.”

Administration: 105,700. Equipment: 56,100. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 359,000. Professional Services: 69,900. Salaries: 4,518,200. Travel and Training: 50,100.

Total Court and Sheriff Services: 5,159,000

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: I believe it was during the discussion we had in committee, actually, Chair, regarding the IRP, the immediate roadside prohibitions, that one of the other provinces – the rationale for initiating their program was that the court systems were so blocked up that it was causing an issue. I think the chiefs of police here said that that's not the case here on Prince Edward Island, which is something we should be very happy about, but I just want to ask the question: How are we in relation to other provinces in terms of the times of people getting justice in the court system?

Hon. B. Thompson: I believe we lead the country.

P. Bevan-Baker: That's great. That's really all I just wanted to confirm. Lucky us.

Hon. B. Thompson: It's good to be No. 1.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

[3:45 p.m.]

PEI Judiciary

“Appropriations provided for the Provincial Court Judges, Prothonotary, and Justice of the Peace.” Administration: 13,000. Equipment: 5,500. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 4,700. Professional Services: 125,100. Salaries: 1,976,700. Travel and Training: 66,300. Grants: 9,300.

Total PEI Judiciary: 2,200,600

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thanks, Chair.

Just looking at the travel and training line. When provincial court judges, the protonotary, and the justices of the peace travel, they travel on this budget that's allotted for them.

Bobbi Lawlor-White: That's correct.

M. MacFarlane: Where's the line for – I think there's a fairly regular remuneration review. Is that captured in this line as well, or is that independent from this section?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: The cost of the review? There would be some honorariums, so that would get lumped into the salary line, but those honorariums are only paid out when the review happens every three years or every five years, whatever the cadence is.

M. MacFarlane: I know we just recently appointed a new prothonotary. Is there also not a deputy prothonotary?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yes, there is. Morgan was the deputy; he was appointed prothonotary.

M. MacFarlane: So, is the deputy prothonotary's position vacant?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yes. I know the prothonotary – I don't think she's retired quite yet. They're probably backfilling each other for now, but it will be.

M. MacFarlane: There's actually multiple justices of the peace. It just says justice of the peace in the description, but I think there are – are there not several paid justices of the peace now?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: There are, yes.

M. MacFarlane: Can you tell me how many there are?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't know if I have that, actually – how many we would have. (Indistinct)

M. MacFarlane: That's all I have.

Thank you, Chair.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Access and Privacy Services Office

“Appropriations provided for the administration of the Access and Privacy Services for Government.” Administration: 3,100. Equipment: 1,400. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 3,700. Professional Services: 500. Salaries: 690,600. Travel and Training: 4,200.

Total Access and Privacy Services Office: 703,500

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Is there still a \$5 fee attached to FOIPP requests?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: Yes.

M. MacFarlane: Is it any thought that that's going to be removed or increased, heaven forbid, or any changes contemplated to that number?

Hon. B. Thompson: No changes.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. We often hear about delays in processing times. Do you keep track of data associated with delays or processing time waits?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We do have stats for last fiscal. We do keep track of it. For last fiscal, we had 51 percent of requests answered within 30 days, 77 within 60 days, and then 100 percent over 61 days. The timing usually is because of the large amount of records, and if it needs to be reviewed by a lawyer, if anything needs to be adjusted there, or if there are third parties that need to be consulted.

M. MacFarlane: So, there are benchmarks that we're evaluating our own results against?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: We track stats, yes. I don't know if there's a benchmark per se, but I assume they're tracking it against something.

M. MacFarlane: Yeah, I think that would be important when we're looking at – it's a pretty.... Relative to the other sections, it certainly doesn't look to be funded exorbitantly, but –

Hon. B. Thompson: It's supposed to be cost recovery, you know – \$5.

[Laughter]

M. MacFarlane: I guess my thought would be that if we're not really benchmarking our provincial results either against a standard or other jurisdictions, it's hard to know if the section needs further support. Do we hear anything from the office as to whether it needs more support?

[3:50 p.m.]

Bobbi Lawlor-White: There was no submission for new positions for this upcoming budget. We did add one, I think it was last fiscal or the previous fiscal; I'm not sure. There was one analyst position that was added in budget, but not this year. It was either last year or the year before.

M. MacFarlane: In the fall sitting, the Health and Social Development committee tabled the review of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. When do we anticipate any amendments or the new act to come forward?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: I don't have any timelines specific to that, just that there was a review completed in November 2025 but no further notes on deadlines.

M. MacFarlane: And no note of any budget money attached to moving that forward?

Bobbi Lawlor-White: No.

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

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Family Law, Court Services, and Access and Privacy Services Office: 12,556,000

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Department of Justice and Public Safety: 97,584,600

Shall it carry? Carried.

I'm going to call a recess for just two minutes.

[The Committee recessed from 3:51 p.m. to 3:53 p.m.]

Chair: Minister, do you have a stranger you'd like to bring onto the floor?

Hon. D. Compton: I do.

Chair: Shall it be granted? Granted.

We'll just get you, whenever you're ready, to state your name and title for Hansard.

Kelli Bulger: Kelli Bulger, director of finance.

Chair: Alright, page 136, everyone.

Corporate Services

Corporate Services

"Appropriations provided for the operation of the office of the Minister and Deputy Minister and centralized corporate services."

Administration: 17,900. Equipment: 6,500.

Materials, Supplies, and Services: 8,000.

Professional Services: 10,000. Salaries: 599,800.

Travel and Training: 48,400.

Total Corporate Services: 690,600

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Hi, Kelli. Nice to see you.

[3:55 p.m.]

This is a new department, or a department with a slightly different name, and I'm just wondering whether there was any funding in this section – presumably, it would be in this section – for that transition from what it was previously to the Department of Land and Environment.

Kelli Bulger: Not in this section. This is primarily the minister/deputy office and corporate services like finance, HR, and comms. In the next section, we did have a position transfer over from the former Housing, Land and Communities to support policy and planning.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay, great. That's all I have for this section. Thanks, Chair.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Policy and Planning

"Appropriations provided for planning, development, and implementation of departmental policies and strategic initiatives."

Administration: 1,100. Equipment: 1,500.
Salaries: 387,700. Travel and Training: 3,700.

Total Policy and Planning: 394,000

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks.

I'm just wondering, with the expenses of this department last year, what particular, specific policies or strategies were implemented.

Kelli Bulger: In the last year – so, this is a new section.

P. Bevan-Baker: Oh, a new section?

Kelli Bulger: A new section in the current year. The director of this section transferred over from the corporate service section in the current year, as well as a strategic planner analyst, as well as there is one new position transferred from former HLC. This is a new section to support the department in developing policy.

P. Bevan-Baker: So, the answer would be, I would presume, none from last year because it didn't exist then, but for the upcoming year, for the funding put in place for this year, is there anything in your book there, Kelli, for what they are actually planning to do for either strategies or policy?

Kelli Bulger: They are looking at the development of a department strategic plan, which is something we have not had previously, but now with the amalgamation of land and environment, it's a very logical combination. There is an opportunity there for commonalities that lend themselves towards a strategic plan, so that's on the top of the list for this section.

They also plan to support the forest policy. They're coming forward with the new *Forest Management Act* in the fall, and forest policy will follow through next year.

P. Bevan-Baker: I'm really glad to hear that, particularly that last bit. I know that we have a very comprehensive and well researched, well written forest report, the commission report that came out. That comes later, of course, in the department so I'll hold my questions on that for now, but I'm glad that that was one of the specific things you mentioned that they're going to be focusing on.

I don't think I have anything else for this section, Chair.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Corporate Services: 1,084,600

Shall it carry? Carried.

Technical Services and Standards

Administration

“Appropriations provided for the management and support of the Technical Services and Standards Division.” Administration: 44,500. Equipment: 3,800. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 9,200. Professional Services: 2,300. Salaries: 1,133,100. Travel and Training: 15,600.

Total Administration: 1,208,500

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks.

Again, I'm not sure if this is a new division or not, Kelli, but I'm just not sure what technical services and standards are, so if you could just give us an idea of what that actually is.

Kelli Bulger: Sure. It is the former land division that fell under Housing, Land and Communities. It's been subdivided into two divisions. This would be the division management account, I would call it, for inspection services, which is the –

P. Bevan-Baker: Next section.

Kelli Bulger: – inspector of the next section. It has the director, the administration/customer service section, and the client service officers. That's what this section is.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay. It just demonstrates to me how much work is involved when we change the name of a department.

That's all I have for this section. Thanks, Chair.

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

G. McNeilly: Are the inspection services – I'm just looking in the big book. I just had one

question about the.... Is it the Lean Six review?
Is that what that would be?

Kelli Bulger: Yeah, that's in the next section.

G. McNeilly: Oh, is it in the next section? Okay.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Inspection Services

[4:00 p.m.]

"Appropriations provided for the operation of Inspection Services including electrical, boiler, liquified petroleum gas, plumbing, elevators and lifts, amusement rides, building, petroleum storage systems, ozone layer protection, and unsightly properties." Administration: 37,100. Equipment: 35,400. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 115,600. Professional Services: 505,800. Salaries: 2,968,400. Travel and Training: 200,300. Grants, 101,200.

Total Inspection Services: 3,963,800

With that, yes, we are going to switch. We'll start back here tomorrow.

Hon. D. Compton: 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 the grant of supply to His Majesty, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Motions Other Than Government

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

M. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, that Motion 30 now be read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: Motion 30: Recognizing the importance of Provincial Parks across the Province.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, the following motion:

WHEREAS Prince Edward Island's provincial parks provide residents and visitors with access to natural spaces that promote physical health, mental well-being, and community engagement;

AND WHEREAS the provincial park system plays a vital role in conserving biodiversity, protecting wildlife habitats, and preserving the Island's unique ecological heritage;

AND WHEREAS provincial parks contribute significantly to the tourism economy, attracting visitors and supporting local businesses across the province;

AND WHEREAS these parks serve as educational resources, offering opportunities for environmental learning and fostering stewardship among Islanders of all ages;

AND WHEREAS climate change and development pressures underscore the need for continued investment in and protection of provincial parks to ensure their sustainability for future generations;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly recognizes the importance of Prince Edward Island's provincial park system and commits to supporting its preservation, enhancement, and accessibility for all Islanders.

[4:05 p.m.]

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

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

S. Dillon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour to rise today to lead the discussion on Motion 30. I want to begin by thanking my colleague and the Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke for seconding this motion.

I want to say, although there aren't a number of provincial parks – or any – that are in my district, I do take the opportunity to visit our provincial parks across the Island. I feel like it's really important to stand up and say that although there may not be any in the city, we certainly, as people in the city, tend to use these parks.

Many in this House know that District 11 Charlottetown-Belvedere is a bustling hub. While my district does not contain a provincial park within its boundaries, the people I represent are some of the most frequent users of these spaces. On any given weekend, you'll see families from Belvedere packing up their vehicles and heading to places like Cabot Beach, Northumberland, or Brudenell, and they do this because they recognize that our provincial parks are the outdoor living rooms of Prince Edward Island.

Our provincial parks provide more than just a place to pitch a tent or have a picnic. They are essential to the physical and mental health of all of us, and in an increasingly digital world, these spaces are often a necessary reprieve – a place where Islanders can disconnect from their screens and reconnect with nature. Whether it's a senior taking a morning walk on a groomed trail or children discovering a hermit crab in a tidal pool, these experiences are foundational to the quality of our life.

By supporting this motion, we are committing to the idea that access to nature should not be a luxury; it should be a right preserved for every Islander.

Beyond the personal benefits, we must speak candidly about the economic engine that is in our provincial park system. Tourism is the cornerstone of the PEI economy, and our parks are often the primary draw for the thousands of visitors who come across the bridge or the ferry every summer.

Our parks do not operate in a vacuum. When a family stays in a provincial campground, they're not just paying a nightly fee to the Province. They are buying groceries at the local Co-op, they are filling their tanks at the local gas station, and they're visiting small business and craft shops that line our rural highways. For many small communities across PEI, the local provincial park is the heartbeat of the summer economy. Without continued investment in these

facilities, we risk the vibrancy of the rural businesses that depend on this foot traffic.

We must also recognize that we are in a competitive global market for tourism. Visitors today are looking for an authentic, high-quality outdoor experience. If our provincial parks fall into disrepair, if the washrooms aren't modern, if the trails aren't accessible, or if the amenities are outdated, we lose the tourism dollars to other provinces.

Our parks are often the first impression a visitor has of Prince Edward Island. They are a showcase of our hospitality and of our standards, and continued investment ensures that PEI remains a destination of choice, keeping our tourism numbers high and ensuring that our province continues to lead the region in visitor spending per capita.

Just on a personal note, my brother and his family live in Ontario and they have been coming to PEI since.... I don't know, since they were ten and they're now 30, so 20 years? And every year they would come they would say: "Aunt Susie, are we going to Basin Head this year?" We would pack the car, get the picnic all arranged, pack the beach chairs, and we would head to Basin Head. It kind of became part of our tradition in our summer visit with my brother and his family, and they loved it. They loved to jump off the bridge and off the wharf, and the Singing Sands, and it was beautiful countryside all the way to Basin Head. It was a really huge and big part of when they would come to visit.

Like I said, although there aren't any in our district, it is important to keep them well maintained so that visitors – like my brother and his family when they come to visit – can enjoy the beauty that Prince Edward Island has to offer.

Finally, these parks are centers for our community engagement. They host a multitude of gatherings, from local sporting events to family reunions. They are the infrastructure that allows us to come together as Islanders, and whether it's the economic spinoff from a weekend tournament at a park or a seasonal job provided to our students and seniors, the provincial park system is a massive contributor to our provincial treasury and our local pride.

In conclusion, this motion is about more than just green space. It's about smart, strategic

investment in the PEI brand and in our rural economies, and in the everyday lives of the people that we represent.

[4:10 p.m.]

I urge all members in this House to support Motion 30. Let us commit to ensuring that our provincial parks remain the envy of the Atlantic and a pillar of our Island economy for years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: I'll call upon the seconder of the motion, the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

H. MacLennan: Just wondering if I can get the podium.

[Interjections]

An Hon. Member: Tell us about Green Park.

H. MacLennan: It's coming.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a privilege to rise in this Legislative Assembly to formally second Motion 30. I want to begin by thanking the Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere for bringing this important matter forward and for her advocacy on behalf of all Islanders who utilize our park system.

In District 23 Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, we understand that our provincial parks are not just scenic backdrops. They are fundamental to our rural economy, our social fabric, and the historical identity of the Prince County region.

Before I speak to the local impacts in my district, I believe it's necessary to place the importance of our parks within the broader economic context of Prince Edward Island. We must look at the data to understand the gravity of the system we are discussing today.

Tourism on the Island is a primary economic driver. Currently, tourism accounts for approximately 6 percent of our province's gross domestic product. To put that into perspective for the House, that is three times the national average. This industry supports 8,900 full-time-equivalent jobs annually, providing livelihoods

for families in every single one of our 27 districts.

The year 2025 was a watershed moment for the industry. We welcomed a record 1.87 million non-resident visitors to our shores, which represented a 10 percent increase over the previous year. This influx of visitors translated into record-level spending, with Destination Canada estimating a 12.4 percent increase in expenditures compared to 2024. Furthermore, this activity provides the very revenue that will allow us to fund our schools and our hospitals. In 2024 alone, tourism spending generated a record-setting \$87.9 million in provincial tax revenue – a 4.5 percent increase over 2023, and a full 7 percent higher than our pre-pandemic levels in 2019.

Our provincial parks, situated strategically from East Point to North Cape, are the primary magnets that draw these visitors and their spending into our rural communities. The demand for these spaces is truly undeniable. In 2025, we witnessed a record-breaking year for our provincial campgrounds, with campsite sales surging by 15.64 percent over the 2024 season. This remarkable growth is a clear signal from the public: our provincial parks are exactly where residents and visitors want to be.

In my own district of Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, we see the localized version of these provincial success stories. I only live a couple miles away from Green Park...

[Hear, hear!]

H. MacLennan: ...and made many family trips to the park in my younger years. It is a place close to my heart, and I would like to show the impact parks can have on communities.

Green Park has always been a place where people gather. For thousands of years, from the Mi'kmaq who first lived along the shores of Malpeque Bay to the Acadian settlers – and later, generations of Islanders – it has been a place rooted in community. That tradition continues today, not just in its history but through the events and activities that bring people together year after year.

[4:15 p.m.]

Take the blueberry festival for example – another local, community-driven celebration in the region that reflects the same spirit. Like so

many rural festivals across Prince Edward Island, it is built on volunteers, local pride, and a deep connection to the land. It complements what we see at Green Park: people coming together to celebrate what makes their community unique.

Nowhere is that more visible than at Green Park itself during the summer season.

[Hear, hear!]

H. MacLennan: [Laughter] The park is alive with activity – families camping along the river, children in the playground, visitors walking the trails, and people gathering at the shipbuilding museum to connect with their Island's past. I know when I was a lot younger, it was always fun to take the stairs to go up to the lookout peak. You can see for miles and miles around, but I don't think it's something I could do today.

[Interjection]

H. MacLennan: I don't know about that. It's quite high. [Laughter]

But it was during festival time that Green Park truly came into its own.

[Hear, hear!]

H. MacLennan: They know a good park.

The Rock the Boat music festival was held at Green Park as part of the Tyne Valley Oyster Festival....

[Hear, hear!]

H. MacLennan: [Laughter] Oh dear.

It became one of the signature events in western PEI. It brought nationally recognized Canadian artists to a small rural community – names like Our Lady Peace, the Road Hammers, Default, Alan Doyle, the Trews, Haywire, the Reklaws, and Trooper performing in an outdoor setting that only a place like Green Park...

[Hear, hear!]

H. MacLennan: ...could offer. [Laughter]

Oh dear. Glad this session is almost over.

This was not a small gathering.... [Laughter]

This was not a small gathering.... [Laughter]

Oh dear. It's going to take a while for this motion.

The festival drew in thousands of people, with events planned for crowds in the range of 2,000 attendees for a single weekend. It did peak at over 5,000 people one year, making it one of the largest events in the region.

What is especially important is this: Rock the Boat was not just about music; it was about community. It was a major fundraiser for Tyne Valley and area with proceeds going back into local initiatives, facilities, and organizations. It was a major reason why our new rink was paid off in such a short time. It relied on volunteers – often hundreds of them – in a small community where nearly everyone contributed in some way.

During that weekend, Green Park became a hub of energy.

[Hear, hear!]

H. MacLennan: [Laughter] Oh dear.

It became a hub of energy, with music, food, oysters, laughter, and most importantly, connections. Visitors came from across the Island and Canada, and they left with a sense of what makes Prince Edward Island so special. It was a weekend where Islanders from near and far would return to reconnect with their family and their friends.

[4:20 p.m.]

But just as importantly, events like Rock the Boat, the blueberry festival, and the broader Tyne Valley Oyster Festival keep our community strong. They give young people a place to gather, families a place to reconnect, and local organizations the resources they need to thrive. It offers a place for families to host family reunions.

The park is not just a park; it is a living piece of Island history. Through these community-led activities, it continues to play a vital role in bringing people together, just as it has for generations.

Today, it preserves that history through the shipbuilding museum and the Yeo House, but it also serves as a modern economic hub. With its mix of riverfront cabins and over 120 campsites,

it brings a steady stream of consumers into Tyne Valley to support places like Dillon's Convenience Store, Backwoods Burger, Valley Pearl, and the Tyne Valley Teas Café. Many families in the area also use the park to reconnect as they come home to the area from away.

Similarly, Belmont Provincial Park also offers a vital day use area for locals and visitors. Not as popular, is it?

[Laughter]

H. MacLennan: With you, anyway.

These parks ensure that the economic benefits of tourism are not concentrated solely in our urban centres but are distributed into the heart of rural Prince County.

To ensure the record of this House fully reflects the scale of the system we are committing to support, I would like to detail the facilities and the locations that comprise our provincial network.

Our system consists of eight provincial campgrounds, 13 day-use parks, and the Mark Arendz Provincial Ski Park at Brookvale. These sites provide a rigorous schedule of services, including but not limited to 24-hour security, laundry facilities, kitchen shelters, dumping stations, supervised swimming, and a diverse recreational programming.

To ensure the record of this House reflects the full scale of the system we are discussing today, I now would like to list the specific sites that comprise our provincial network. We have eight provincial campgrounds, all of which opened last year on June 6th, including Jacques Cartier, Cedar Dunes, Cabot Beach, Linkletter, Red Point, Northumberland, Panmure Island, and Brudenell River.

The 12 day-use provincial parks providing public access include Argyle Shore, Basin Head, Bloomfield, Bonshaw, Canoe Cove, Chelton, Kings Castle, Sally's Beach, Union Corner, Strathgartney, and the Mark Arendz Provincial Ski Park at Brookvale, and of course, two very beautiful parks this Island has to offer: Belmont and Green Park.

[Interjections]

H. MacLennan: Just waiting for it.

The data is clear. Our parks are growing. They are profitable for the provincial treasury, and they are essential for rural sustainability. By supporting Motion 30, we are affirming our commitment to a system that works for all Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: A big thank you to the member from Green Park.

[Laughter]

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

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

I certainly want to thank the mover and the seconder of the motion. I'll start with my comments: I have never seen this Legislature be as happy as it's been in the last few minutes. Wouldn't it be great if it was always like that?

With that, also the seconder of the motion obviously – and this is the last time I'm going to use this park's name. Obviously, the seconder of the motion has great memories and has great pride for Green Park.

[4:25 p.m.]

But again, I do, I want to thank the mover and the seconder of this motion. It's a motion that I will wholeheartedly endorse/approve, and I do want to thank them once again for bringing it forward.

I also want to thank all of the workers at our parks right across the province, whether it's our day parks, whether it's where we have overnight camping, so on and so forth. They are an integral part and they're an integral fabric, if you like, of so many parks right across the province. They're the ones that so often, when tourists, when visitors come to our Island, who do they see first if they're going to a campground, whether it's a day park or whether it's for overnight camping? They see the workers there. Those workers welcome them; they show them that Island hospitality that Prince Edward Island and Prince Edward Islanders are so well known for.

I also want to thank the workers and the staff in my department for the great work that they do and have done over the last number of years.

I'm not going to mention that park's name again, but I will reference ones up in the western part of the province, certainly Jacques Cartier Park where additional campsites have been added in the last few years, work at Bloomfield day park and the upgrades that have taken place there.

I do recall a few years ago when Kensington-Malpeque and I did a bit of a tour up there in the western part of the province. We went down to Cedar Dunes Park and the member's comment was, "I know there are a lot of bad roads in this province, but this has to be the worst. I can't believe that there's a road like this leading to one of our provincial camping parks that has been let deteriorate to this point." He was absolutely right. Thank goodness the Minister of Transportation got that fixed up shortly after that.

But it's just one part of the tourism sector on PEI, certainly an extremely important part. You look at the growth that we've seen within the tourism sector right across different portions of it. But certainly, you look at the registrations when those registrations opened up at first. We look at 2025 campsites. It was up 15.64 percent over 2024; 2024 itself was a record year, so 2025 beat that by 15.64 percent at campsites.

To date this year, in 2026, we're headed for another record-breaking year at these campgrounds, up another 7.3 percent over last year.

It was obvious from the mover and certainly the seconder of the motion, these campgrounds, they are treasured sites – they are treasured natural spaces. They promote not only a site for visitors to this beautiful, this great province of ours to come to, but even for Islanders, they promote health, well-being, community engagement, and, as I've said, certainly a key driver of our tourism sector.

[4:30 p.m.]

When I mention community engagement, and I have mentioned Bloomfield day park, I recall just a very few years ago when I was a child that we used to have our Sunday school picnics there. There was an older gentleman from the community, he would save up his change for pretty well the whole year. You'd have all these kids raging about so high up to whatever. Anyway, as part of that Sunday school picnic, which would always be held on a Saturday, he would have the stash of coins, and he would

throw them out. You could hardly – it was like bees going to honey, I guess, the children just making a beeline to try to get a penny, a nickel.... Occasionally, you might get a quarter.

Those are the types of memories, though, that these parks – when I talk about communities, the importance of the parks to our communities, and the engagement, the memories that they form for us as Islanders over the years.

We fully – I certainly, as minister – agree that continued investment and protection are essential to ensure these spaces remain accessible and sustainable for future generations.

We look back at when Hurricane Fiona hit this province – the amount of damage that was done right across the province, but certainly to our parks, and the work that was required to clean that damage up, how extensive it was. And we have great partners right across the province in our communities. Just for example, we have been working with watershed groups and Macphail Woods to replant trees and implement shoreline protection projects. These efforts certainly reflect our dedication to climate resilience and environmental stewardship.

Our government is taking significant steps to strengthen and modernize our provincial park system, as I had mentioned, with regard to: the additional sites at Jacques Cartier Park; the work, the new playground, the safer playground that has been put in at Bloomfield day park; the pavement that was laid down going down to Cedar Dunes Park that was neglected, I would have to say; the shoreline protection out at the West Point Lighthouse area, which is right adjacent to Cedar Dunes....

The long and the short, if that shoreline protection – if those reefs had not been put in place, the historic West Point Lighthouse probably would no longer be in existence. But that work stabilized it, and not only did it stabilize it – anybody that has the chance to go up there, I would really recommend it, just to see how it has resulted in the beach moving out, basically, and the protection that it has provided.

But again, our government has committed \$10 million over five years to enhance infrastructure, programming, and services across our parks. We are currently completing year 2 of this plan, and that includes: Panmure Island campground bathroom and office replacements; Cedar Dunes playground equipment installation; pool

upgrades at Brudenell; electrical updates at Red Point Campground; Brookvale, chairlift; Kings Castle day park, beach access ramp; and decking replacement at Basin Head.

The results speak for themselves. In 2025, as I had mentioned, the number of campsites sold increased by 15.64 percent compared to 2024, demonstrating the tremendous demand....

Green Park. Okay, come on.

[Hear, hear!]

[3:35 p.m.]

Hon. E. Hudson: It just demonstrates the growing demand for our park spaces.

For 2026, I want to put it out there: provincial campgrounds in day-use parks will open on June 5th. Having said that, Kings Castle day-use park will actually open on May 29th. I want to point out, too, that Bonshaw day-use park is open year-round.

And when you talk about year-round, certainly it's one of the things that we have endeavored in conjunction with the industry to expand the shoulder seasons within our tourism sector, and we have been successful in that.

You look at some of the figures, for example.

Operations open: In 2025, over 2024, in the month of January, there was a 60 percent increase in the operations that were open. We move to February and it was even better, with 66 percent. March: 70 percent. So, it shows that there is movement. Is there more to be done? Absolutely, but we are moving in the right direction without a doubt.

We are also proud to host events like Jack Frost Winterfest at our Nordic site at Brookvale, and it's these types of festivals that expand the shoulder season as well – not only late spring/early fall, but to take that shoulder season right through the year.

Hon. B. Thompson: Did you mention the newest park?

Hon. E. Hudson: The newest park? No, I'll let another speaker speak to that. I think it would be very appropriate, yes.

With eight campgrounds, 13 day-use parks, and the Mark Arendz Provincial Ski Park, we're certainly proud as a government – proud as Islanders – to provide the experience that visitors to this Island can see.

I said at the outset of my comments just how our provincial parks – whether it's day-use parks or whether it's parks where campers can actually set up their camper or their trailer – are an integral part of the overall tourism sector, and our tourism sector is booming. It really is booming. It's a positive right across the board.

You look back, and it has been growing for quite some time.

I'll give credit where credit is due. The previous administration – they did build; they brought the tourism numbers up. They did. We build on that.

[Interjection]

Hon. E. Hudson: Oh.... But we build on that.

So, in 2019, over what was, as I understand – I do believe that 2018 was a record tourism year in the province, and there were strategies, definitely, that the previous administration put in place that brought it to that.

In 2019, there was a bit of a jump. Then, what hit us? COVID. We went from 2019, 1.6 million visitors, to 2020: just slightly over 500,000. What a drop.

In 2021, it did rebound slightly, back up to 650,000, but from then on, it's just been monumental growth.

We look at 2022: 1,400,000. 2023: 1,615,000. 2024: 1,703,000.

[4:40 p.m.]

Last year: 1,871,000 – up ten percent over 2024 that was a record year.

The thing that really – being a proud Islander, being a proud West Princer.... The importance of tourism right across the province. Now, if we were seeing that growth in one specific area of the province, would that be a concern? To me, it absolutely would be. But we look at where that growth has taken place; that growth has taken place right across the province.

We look in the west: increase of 20 percent.

[Interjection]

Hon. E. Hudson: I'm moving east. I'm moving east.

We look at the north shore central: 18 percent increase. We look at south shore central: 28 percent increase. We look at east: 19 percent increase. We see that growth taking place right across this province.

Just in concluding my remarks, again, I want to thank the mover; I want to thank the seconder. I want to reiterate my appreciation to all of the workers in our campgrounds, all of the workers right across the province in our tourist facilities.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: What is my department's job? It's to get tourists to our beautiful Island the first time – because if we get them here the first time, our operators, our workers, and Islanders as a whole will bring them back. We are seeing that and we will continue to see that.

With that, again, I thank the mover and the seconder for this motion. I will fully support it.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-Pownal.

B. Curran: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm rising today to offer a few – I will say brief – remarks on this motion. I want to thank the mover and the seconder. I think there have been some great, great comments made about our provincial parks. I don't know if you'll find a stronger advocate for his area than the Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke and Green Park. It was very apparent here in the House today – his advocacy for his area and his pride for the parks within his district.

[Interjection]

B. Curran: Especially Green Park, yes.

[Hear, hear!]

B. Curran: This motion provides a useful opportunity to really appreciate the parts of our Island that Islanders can enjoy, whether it's in the summer or in the fall or in the winter. We talk about the Mark Arendz Ski Park and what happens there all winter long, and then during Jack Frost, and it's lined up for kilometres each way; it almost looks like a Tory nomination.

An Hon. Member: They didn't get it.

B. Curran: They didn't. They're not listening. Don't worry.

These parks are a crown jewel for our Island and our Island's tourism industry.

The Minister of Tourism has – quite appropriately, I would have to say – risen in this House a number of times and has really outlined and celebrated the very strong tourism industry and the numbers, and it's just a meteoric rise in the last four or five years. You can see it just walking out of the doors here. The streets of Charlottetown are lined up, the streets of Georgetown are lined up, the streets of Alberton are lined up, the streets of Tyne Valley are lined up with tourists, from one end of the season to the next.

[4:45 p.m.]

But these parks require a lot of maintenance, and I think the people that work at these parks year in and year out take pride in the community and take pride in the provincial parks that they maintain.

And it's a lot of work. I think in my own area – you look at the Brudenell Provincial Park and what a beautiful place that is and the work that goes into that every year just to make it so it's welcoming and warm for Islanders and people from across the world to come and enjoy a beautiful vista, the campground, the beach, you can go for a round of golf if you wish, there's a pool, there's the resort.... It's a lot of good work that goes on down there. I think, like I said, we need to celebrate the people that maintain these parks and keep them in tip-top shape.

As the Minister of Tourism eloquently alluded to, there's \$10 million; I think it was over five years. That's a considerable amount of capital that has to go in to really keep these parks thriving.

We talked about how our provincial parks are a real crown jewel of our tourism industry, and we talked about the almost two million people who came to PEI last year, and that needs to be celebrated more than it really is. That's amazing. We're a province of 180,000 people and we had two million visitors that came to the province last year – a rise from the year before and a rise from the year before that.

I spoke in this House when we recognized some of our tourism industry stakeholders and the work that they do. Those two million people – 1.87 million people – come and spend their hard-earned money here on PEI, and they spend it and they spend it. It's their vacation. They spend it at the convenience stores. They spend it at the Co-ops. They spend it at the gas stations, at our shops.

I talk about the town of Georgetown, the shops that – people that come to the provincial parks come and spend their money on Water Street. There's Richard and Stacy Toms' Maroon Pig that's open all year round. Some of the best desserts and sandwiches you'll find in Kings County – delicious; it is. It's these assets that we have that support the tourism industry like our provincial parks, and it's also for our locals just to get outside and enjoy the fresh air of PEI, run around in the park, run on the jungle gym, and throw the baseball around. These parks provide that.

For some people that maybe perhaps live in the city and want to get across the bridge where time slows down just a little bit – it's great for people from all across the province to be able to come to some of these provincial parks.

I've talked about the economic perspective, but at the end of the day, you also have to think about the family perspective. I think of myself; some of my greatest childhood memories happened at our provincial parks. I think of Kings Castle in the area the Minister of Land and Environment represents. We used to go down in the middle of June, our school. I think grades 1, 2, and 3 would hop on the school bus and we'd go down to Kings Castle for the day, and it was a lot of fun. You know the little wooden train that was there? You'd be climbing in and out of that and.... What's that?

An Hon. Member: Bears.

B. Curran: Bears, yeah. That was a lot of fun. You got to get out of the classroom and go and enjoy. It was just a lot of fun. After that, they'd throw us on the bus and we'd go to Rainbow Valley, which sadly, sadly closed but that was also a lot of fun.

I also think of more recent.... I have a childhood memory where the Minister of Education and Early Years represents, at Sally's Beach – one of the most beautiful beaches on Prince Edward

Island, and at that point, it was a hidden gem. It's a hidden gem for PEI.

[4:50 p.m.]

Hon. R. Croucher: You should see it now.

B. Curran: I will. I will. We'll go. We'll go.

Hon. R. Croucher: It's a date.

B. Curran: Sounds good.

My mother's family settled in Annandale, and we would go and visit family and distant relatives. We would go and spend the afternoon and evening at Sally's Beach and, like I said, throw the baseball around, have a picnic. We would take friends; I'd take my friends and we'd all hang out. It was a great time.

But of course, I'll tell you, the Minister of Education and Early Years is pretty lucky. He's got another crown jewel, I'd say one of the crown jewels of tourism in eastern PEI, in Basin Head Beach.

Hon. R. Croucher: Top five.

B. Curran: Top five beaches, yeah. You have the beach, and you have the bridge where kids jump off. I remember – and it's probably why I don't like to swim – I was just a little kid, and I climbed over the bridge, and I was really excited to jump, but then I got scared. I got scared and I wouldn't jump until my sister pushed me over. Well, she didn't do that twice because I didn't go near the bridge again.

But just last summer, my wife – her family is from Cape Breton, and there was a few people over, and she really wanted to go to Basin Head and the Singing Sands. When I got there, it was probably around ten o'clock in the morning. We set up our tents and we had our cooler of food.

We hadn't anticipated a whole lot of extras showing up of our family, but I kind of fell asleep on the beach – it was a nice little Sunday rest – and I woke up, and I looked, and family had just circled us. Everyone ended up coming to Basin Head, and it was a great afternoon. We had a lot of fun. It's a memory that I had as a child – a little traumatic, mind you – but now my son has that same memory of being at Basin Head, enjoying family and enjoying our time together. These parks – they provide that.

I also think of Panmure Island. You pull up and there's that long road. You climb up over the dune – the walkway....

[Interjection]

B. Curran: Yeah, I didn't climb on the dune, no; that's illegal. You can't do that. But you just climbed over and there was just a beautiful beach. We're just so lucky here on PEI – lucky to have some of the most beautiful places in the world for people to come and see and enjoy.

We were talking about the Mark Arendz Ski Park. We used to go – Vernon River School. We would jump on the bus once a year, again, and we'd go and ski down the hills – likely a little bit more dangerous than we should have been, going a little bit faster than we probably should have been. But everybody – we still talk about it when our friends get together, when we were kids. We talk about old stories. We talk about the time that I looked like a tumbleweed going down the side hill at Brookvale and waking up, shaking and seeing Tweety birds and people zooming on by. It was just a lot of fun.

We talked about the provincial park up west and the prized asset we have there at the West Point Lighthouse. My wife may not be all that happy that I'm saying this, but there is only one place in PEI that she has been begging to go that we haven't gotten to, and that is the West Point Lighthouse. Now it's a running joke; we'll probably never actually get there. But that's the one lighthouse on PEI she wants to go see.

[Interjection]

B. Curran: We just haven't gotten around to it. Haven't gotten around to it.

An Hon. Member: Too cheap or what?

B. Curran: Well, gas is expensive. [Laughter]

[Interjection]

B. Curran: Yeah, I don't know. I may not be allowed to pass that boundary. There might be a border guard there.

But it's another crown jewel that people come from all over the world to go see. It's a beautiful black and white lighthouse that overlooks another beautiful vista.

But like I said, it's those assets that our province has that should be and are celebrated by our communities. It brings people into our communities and it allows Islanders and people from all around the world to come to PEI and enjoy the....

[4:55 p.m.]

It seems like on PEI, time slows down. So, people come from all over the world – big cities – to come and visit and enjoy some of the most beautiful views on PEI.

I talk about Brudenell Park. You look down the Brudenell River and there's a campground, and like I said, there's horseback riding there. The Coopers are operating now and you can take a trail. You walk on the beach with the horses, and it's really quite nice. It's booming – booming in the summer. It's another part of that Island hospitality. You get everybody out to the Brudenell campground and go for a round of golf – two of the most beautiful golf courses on PEI.

[Interjection]

B. Curran: Yes, yes it is, yeah. Dundarave's a little long for me because my drive is not that strong. It's kind of that middle game that's my strength. Brudenell golf course is beautiful, especially that hole 10 – I think it's hole 10 – where it kind of doglegs over onto an island. It's really quite nice. You kind of have to go out over the ocean. If you can pull the ball a little bit, you'll be alright.

We have Crowbush too. It's not a provincial park....

Oh, I think I'm being told to sit down, but I just want to reiterate my support for this motion to celebrate our provincial parks from tip to tip. We have to ensure that those parks stay.... Like I said – the minister mentioned the record investments in improving some of those parks that need to stay.... We need to continue to invest in those parks for our generations to enjoy and our visitors to PEI to enjoy. I think we will continue to do that and enjoy – and have everybody come to PEI and enjoy our provincial parks.

With that, I want to thank the mover of the motion, and the seconder of the motion as well. I know the mover will have to come across the bridge a little bit to enjoy some of our parks in

the eastern end, but we'll welcome her with open arms. Like I said, we'll have to continue to support our parks and celebrate what they do for our Island and our Island hospitality and our tourism industry.

With that, I will pass the floor to whoever wants to speak next on this motion.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Land and Environment.

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

I don't have any notes and I don't think I have much time, but –

An Hon. Member: Bring it home.

An Hon. Member: We're going to have to extend the hour.

Hon. D. Compton: I'll bring it home, yeah.

In my district, we've got three day parks and an overnight campground. The overnight campground is Northumberland Park. You can watch the ferry come in from there – beautiful ocean view.

Hon. B. Thompson: Probably beautiful sunsets there.

Hon. D. Compton: Beautiful sunsets – but that's not the only one with beautiful sunsets.

I guess my least fond memory of Northumberland Park is that we had to go there for swimming lessons. You were there – it was so cold. You'd go – oh, it was awful, it was awful. I still am not a great swimmer and I blame it on going to Northumberland Park. But we caught the bus at the school and off we went. Our parents didn't care if we were gone for a week; they were just glad to get rid of us, I think. Anyway, we had swimming lessons. It didn't matter how cold it was or how long you were down there, and I think we were there for most of the day. So, that's not a good memory of Northumberland Park.

But everyone who goes to Northumberland Park – there's a number of people who go and they're seasonal there – they just think it is absolutely beautiful, and I know it is. A lot of cottages surround the park there.

We used to have a second overnight campground/provincial park, Selkirk park, but now it's been taken over by the Belfast Development Corporation. It has the golf course there and the historical society, which is having a tea on Saturday. They've moved the Church of Scotland to adjoin/connect to the Croft House, so they're going to have a tea there. Everyone should check it out on Facebook. It will be a lovely event. They want everyone to see the work they've done to the Church of Scotland.

In connection with that, the Development Corporation is also looking after Pinette Park, which is a provincial day park now. The Development Corporation is opening the gates, closing it, and cleaning the bathrooms.... If you want to see a sunset, go to Pinette Park and the Pinette causeway.

[5:00 p.m.]

I remember going to Florida. We went to Captiva Island for sailing. I didn't sail, but my husband and son did. They took lessons. It was, I don't know, 20 starts a day. Sounded awful to me, so Katie and I shopped and enjoyed ourselves. But everyone on the island talked about the sunset. "You have to go and see the sunset." It was a beach where everyone went.

So, we thought, "Well, we better go see the sunset," and we thought, "Well, yeah, it's the sunset, but it's not Pinette, and I don't think we have to come to Florida to see it," but everyone there thought it was wonderful. I only wish that they could see the sunset in Pinette.

Pinette Park is a day park. It's a very quiet little point sticking out there before you go over the bridge of the Pinette River. You can see the fishing boats. Charlie McGeoghegan fishes out of there with *Boards and Glue* – the name of his boat – and a few other fishermen. Also, when you sail out there, you go past MacAulay's, which is another wharf where we have some fishermen. It's just a beautiful spot. You see some sailboats come in there.

I'm going to move on to – the member talked about Kings Castle. What a wonderful place. What a wonderful little place it is.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Hon. D. Compton: But I'm not done. I'm not done.

Speaker: The hour has been called, and –

Hon. D. Compton: I didn't get to mention Dolly – Darlene Cuddy – who operates the park and does a wonderful job. It's very important that I mention her.

Speaker: Well, the request has been made to extend the hour.

Hon. D. Compton: But I'm not done.

Hon. B. Thompson: Obviously, he hasn't been to Kings Castle.

Hon. D. Compton: He hasn't.

Speaker: Well, minister....

Hon. D. Compton: On that, I'll adjourn debate on this motion, seconded by the Minister of Finance.

Speaker: Thank you very much.

The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Hon. Z. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Georgetown-Pownal, that this House adjourn until Friday, May 22nd, at 10:00 a.m.

[The Legislature adjourned until Friday, 22 May 2026 at 10:00 a.m.]