

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Colin LaVie

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The Legislature sat at 1:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome back to my colleagues for another day of important debate in the provincial Legislature, and all those who are tuned in at home and to those who have joined us in the public gallery, welcome.

Let me begin my greetings by saying just how pleased I am to see the return of the Edd McNeill Memorial Hockey Tournament, which begins tomorrow, this weekend, in Summerside at the Slemon Park ice pad after missing the last two years due to COVID. This is the 25th edition of the Edd. It will take place all over Summerside. There's a record 16 teams for the U13 AAA division all over from Atlantic Canada.

I remember when my son, Cal, played in this tournament. This is one of the great, special hockey tournaments that are out there. There's a skills competition, there's rings for the winning team, and there's a tremendous amount of excitement with the announcers in the rink.

I just can't help but thinking, after a lot of the bad stories that we've been hearing about hockey across Canada and incidents connected to hockey, this is one of these events where, if you're able to get out to Summerside and actually take part and witness it, it will reaffirm your belief in what hockey is and what it could and should be.

To Dave and Dwayne McNeill, who honour their father with this tournament, I look forward to the success. Thanks to all the volunteers, and good luck to the players, parents, and volunteers. It is a wonderful, wonderful event and I'm glad to see it back.

Earlier this week, I had the pleasure to host the first official visit to PEI for His Excellency Kanji Yamanouchi, who's the new Japanese Ambassador to Canada. Prince Edward Island enjoys a very close

relationship with Japan. They're our ninth biggest trading partner; largely potatoes, seafood, and blueberries. We have a huge tourism cultural connection, largely through Anne of Green Gables. One of the biggest companies and one of the companies that Japan is most proud of, Sekisui Diagnostics, has an office here on Prince Edward Island. It employs 125 people, so we have that connection. As well, Osaka, Japan will host the World Expo in 2025, and Prince Edward Island has been invited, with Anne in tow, to be part of the Canadian Pavilion, so that's exciting times ahead.

Keeping in that line, later this week, I'll be having an introductory call with the Hon. David Eby, who's the new Premier of British Columbia, taking over from John Horgan, who I've gotten to know over the last three and a half years as a close colleague and a friend. John was chair of the Council of the Federation. Always worked hard and had a special, soft spot for Prince Edward Island, which I always appreciated and tried hard to exploit at that table. That's largely because the Chief Medical Officer in British Columbia is, of course, no stranger to this House, Dr. Bonnie Henry, who is from Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

I look forward to meeting the new premier and building a relationship with them. But I did want to take a moment just to say thank you to John, who's recovering from some cancer surgery, but tells me he's doing well and looking forward to the next part of his exciting journey. On behalf of all Islanders, to John Horgan, thanks for your tremendous service.

Finally, this weekend, December 3rd, to be exact, is the annual Christmas Daddies Telethon on CTV Atlantic from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. This is an annual tradition in the Maritimes, Mr. Speaker, as you well know, and has been hosted since 1964, having raised about \$35.5 million for children and families in need at Christmas time.

I had the great honour of getting a visit today, to my office, from Jimmy the Janitor, who's one of the hosts of the event. He wouldn't leave until he got a fairly sizable donation, which I was glad to give on behalf of Islanders. He asked me to keep under

wraps how much that money is until Saturday at the grand unveiling.

I just would say to all Islanders who are watching, give if you can. It is a wonderful cause that will help Islanders. The money given from PEI stays in PEI, which is a wonderful thing. As Jimmy and I discussed, if you can't give money, continue to give kindness and help and support to all those out at this time of need. It's been a tough year for everyone, as we know, and Christmas Daddies would like to make sure the cheer is spread far and wide.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and enjoy the proceedings.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to start out by welcoming some friends to the public gallery today. I see Justin and Amber and Astro MacKinnon, who are here with us today. Welcome to you, and also Bethany Collicutt-McNab, who is one of the regulars here in the public gallery. Thank you for joining us today.

Today is November 30th, which is Saint Andrew's Day, patron saint of Scotland. I'm looking across the room here and I see the Deputy Premier, resplendent in her tartan and a magnificent brooch. It's lovely to see you wearing your tartan. I neglected to put mine on this morning, Deputy Premier, but it's lovely to see what you're wearing today.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Leader of the Opposition: 'Tis the season, and it's the season, apparently, for new CEOs and executive directors. I have a list of people who have taken over positions in fairly important places on Prince Edward Island.

The new CEO of The Guild, just around the corner here, is Roma Dingwell. She's come to us from Nova Scotia, from the Chester Playhouse, and also the ECMAs, the East

Coast Music Awards. She brings with her a wealth of experience to The Guild, a wonderful arts organization which has provided a location for musicals, for art galleries, for all sorts of events over the years. Welcome, Roma.

We also have a new executive director at the Mi'kmaq Confederacy, and that's Kateri Coade. She lives in my district in Rocky Point. Actually, Kateri is the daughter of Senator Brian Francis, and I've worked with Kateri at the Confederation Centre of the Arts board. She's a wonderful young woman. She has a very active background in social work, and she's held a lot of roles within the MCPEI. Congratulations, Kateri, on being the new executive director of the Mi'kmaq Confederacy.

At the Victoria Playhouse, just down the road from where I live, there's a new artistic director. Of course, the Victoria Playhouse has been in the very capable hands of the Smith family for many, many, many years. I know the Premier has appeared on stage there also many times. Pat and Erskine Smith, and latterly their daughter Emily, have been the real driving force behind the Victoria theatre, and it's now – of course the whole village is a destination, but it was built around the success of the Victoria Playhouse.

That family is finally passing on the reins to somebody else; Johanna Nutter is going to be the new artistic director there. I've known Johanna for a very long time. She actually stayed in our house one summer when we lived even closer to Victoria than we do now. She's a wonderful actor and playwright.

The first time I met her, she was doing a play called *My Pregnant Brother*, which gets your attention. It was about her trans brother, and it was a beautiful story, really touching.

I've got a great fondness for Johanna, and of course for the Victoria Playhouse, where I was on the board for many, many years. Welcome to Johanna, and I hope you have a wonderful time in that very special place.

Finally, in Summerside, the community choir there is back with a new musical director, and that's Krista Bryson. Again,

I've known Krista musically for very many years. We played in a couple of bands together at UPEI. She's now the music director at Three Oaks High School.

I attended an event there last year along with Summerside-Wilmot, where Krista has created this amazing rock band program at Three Oaks High School. It was just a fantastic concert that we attended.

Anyway, Krista now takes over as the music director of the Summerside Community Choir, so congratulations to you, Krista.

Noteworthy, that all four of these leadership positions are being taken up by women. Congratulations to them all.

I hope everybody has a wonderful day here in the Legislature, and I'm looking forward to debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, it's a privilege to rise and welcome everybody here and my colleagues back.

I, too, would like to commend and congratulate the new Summerside Community Choir.

Also, I understand there's going to be a Christmas parade this weekend in Summerside and it's great to see that people can actually see the parade. In past years, you had to drive by. I know my grandkids are certainly looking forward to it.

Also, I envy – the Premier this morning got to spend time with Jimmy the Janitor. Always been a big fan of his. I had a lot of his tapes and he's a pretty good entertainer. Great to hear that, Mr. Premier.

Also, as well, something that's near and dear to me, as the Premier said, this Edd McNeill tournament is a phenomenal tournament. I know the McNeill family. I knew Mr. McNeill; he was a wonderful individual and a great sports – his family grew up in sports.

I can't wait to get out and see some of the games.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to say hello to my colleagues and to everyone joining in the gallery. Justin, Amber, and Astra, as well as Bethany Collicutt-McNab.

I would like to say a special hello to Mike Trainor's class. His Political Studies class is tuning in today from Three Oaks Senior High School, so welcome, and I hope you enjoy the proceedings.

I'm going to say a very special welcome and hello today to Graham, Leo, James, and Rosie. They are tuning in from my sister-in-law – Jennifer Lynch-Bernard, hello to you too. She runs a child care centre out of her home. So, they watch on a regular basis, and of course, they're always excited to see Jeff's sister. So, Jeff's sister says hi, and Jeff's sister hopes everyone has a really great day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise in the House today and welcome everyone back, say hello to everyone in the gallery, and those who are watching from home, especially those in Summerside.

I'd be remiss if I didn't tell you that I have a couple of young friends in the gallery today. Astro and Amber are here, and I just couldn't be more excited to have you. These two amazing girls have helped me host events right across the province, so it's quite a pleasure to have you. Thanks for coming in. I'm also happy to see you too, Justin, but particularly happy to see Astro and Amber here.

In Summerside this weekend, there are a lot of things going on, so in order to stay within

my time limit, I will be quick. There's going to be the Santa Claus Parade, the Yuletide Village, we're doing cups for kids this weekend, and the Summerside Chamber is also hosting a block party.

I know Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke and I am volunteering at all of these things, so we hope to see you at them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pleasure to welcome all my colleagues back here today near the end of our legislative sitting, and everyone in the gallery, of course, and those watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald, where there was a very well-attended public meeting last night, where the Mount Academy was talking about the possibility of building a student centre and residences and purchasing some land from the town to make a permanent home for the Mount Academy in North Rustico. Very exciting times.

One of the things that came up was, people keep asking: I hear a rumour that the Canada Games is not going to hold speed skating at North Rustico in the new rink. And let me put those rumours to rest, that definitely, speed skating will be in North Rustico for the Canada Games. The community is ready, we're all very excited, and it's going to be a great thing.

Lastly, I just wanted to acknowledge the passing Elmer Parsons and I just wanted to send condolences to his wife Helen, his children Cory, Brad, and Jamie, and his grandchildren Caleb, Cruz, and Ryder.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise today, say hello to everyone in the gallery, everyone watching from home.

I'm really looking forward to participating in all of the fun Christmas events that Summerside-Wilmot had mentioned in Summerside. There's even one more thing happening this weekend.

On Sunday, it's Christmas in Tyne Valley. There's going to be hot chocolate, free skating, a bonfire with smores, crafts for the kids, all kinds of fun stuff. You're not going to want to miss that. That's Sunday from 1:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in Tyne Valley. It's going to be a very Christmassy weekend.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Winsloe.

Mr. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad the Premier mentioned the Edd McNeill because my little brother Thatcher is actually bringing a team all the way from Fredericton to compete.

Premier King: (Indistinct)

Mr. Bell: Yes. I told my nephew Malik that I'd be cheering for him unless they're playing Central Attack.

Also want to send out a big thank you – I had to move some things, and I phoned a buddy of mine, John Cusack, and he said, "You know who's the best person to get a truck? Leonard Cusack, out on the Kingston Road." So, I do thank you, Leonard.

This morning, I was just out saying hello in the district, Mr. Speaker, and I ran into someone that you might remember. I know some of the people who have been here a little bit longer might remember Bob Horobin, who worked here at the Legislative Assembly. He was in one of the security roles. Anyway, he just wanted to pass on all his best to all of the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise, say hello to everybody in the gallery, thanks for coming, and everybody watching from home in Charlottetown-West Royalty.

It's that time of year, and we're all excited in our community because the Jingle Bell Walk is here. It's at West Royalty Community Centre and it's going to be Friday at 6:30 p.m. There's lots of different activity.

You have the self-guided walk; that's very popular. But there's cookie decorating, inflatable activities, and I look forward to maybe taking on the Member from Charlottetown-Winsloe, because we let anybody in, so we'll take you on in some sporting events or maybe a slide down the bouncy castle or something.

Just wanted to – before the legislative session sat, I was lucky enough to have a forum in my community, a public forum, just to discuss any issues that anybody wanted to talk about. It was a very enlightening night, and there was a lot of different issues. I want to thank everybody for attending that.

My questions today will be reflective on some of the things that I heard there.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Mr. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and welcome everyone to the gallery.

Last night, or yesterday evening, at our Christmas social at the Old Triangle, I ran into Moe McCabe, and Moe informed me of some good charity work that him and a few others are doing. I said I would recognize him in the Legislature.

So, a group, Shepherd stables: they are donating to a number of charities this season for those in need this time of year. This group consists of Harold Shepherd, Steven Shepherd, Moe McCabe, Wayne MacPherson, Angus Birt, and John Birt. So, thank you to all of them for the work they've done.

I guess while I'm up, I'll also wish my grandmother a happy 82nd birthday. It was on Monday. She lives in seniors' housing in Montague and when I was there last, she says, "Cory, when are they getting here to pick up all these downed trees? Taking forever." I said, "Well, I'll call. I'll see what we can do." Then the next one was, "You can't get anyone here to replace a (Indistinct) – fix anything."

I said, "Okay, look." It's like Question Period.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. Deagle: Then the last one finally was, "Do you know anything about this \$500 from Red Cross? I can't get it."

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deagle: Anyways, I finally got some questions, Mr. Speaker, because I don't get too many in this department.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. Deagle: I did from my grandmother.

Thank you.

Speaker: The stopwatch is off. You could have kept going.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd just like to say happy Saint Andrew's Day to everyone. I am wearing the modern MacRae tartan today. Just like to recognize all of my Scottish ancestry and heritage.

A little bit of trivia: St. Andrew was the disciple in the New Testament who introduced his brother, the Apostle Peter, to Jesus the Messiah. So, it's a great time of year to recognize that.

I want to say hello to everyone in District 4.

It's going to be a Christmas weekend in Belfast-Murray River this weekend. Down in the Murrays, they're having Christmas in the villages and there are a number of events throughout the villages to take in.

I mentioned earlier, that's when you get your lobster croissants. So, come to the Mistletoe Café at Memorial United Church. They do a great job with anything lobster. Appreciate the donations made by all the fishermen to ensure that we have those lobster meals throughout the year.

I just wish everyone a very great day here in the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You know, yourself, how awesome firefighters are, Mr. Speaker. I just want to bring the attention to the house of David Burke, a summer resident of West Covehead. He's the Fire Chief of the City of Ottawa. He approached his association, the Ottawa Professional Firefighters, to come up with something to do for Prince Edward Island after Fiona. They did a raffle.

Yesterday, David reached out to us, and he has 50 \$100 grocery cards to give to needy families in District 8. So, we're working with David, with the schools and nonprofits, to identify those families. A very nice gesture from a summer resident of District 8, and I just wanted to recognize him here today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise. Hi to everyone watching from Mermaid-Stratford, and to everybody in the gallery today.

As we all know, yesterday was Giving Tuesday. The Town of Stratford got a very

special donation from the family of Harry James. Many of you would know Harry James as a pretty special person in the community.

He was in many, many homes fixing lots of appliances and stuff, and his volunteerism within the hockey community; but I'll tell you, there was nothing more special than walking around Harry James' house at Christmas time.

That will be missed, but his family has donated those Christmas lights to the Town of Stratford, and they plan to keep that Christmas spirit alive. I'm pretty excited about that.

A few things that are happening in the community: we have Christmas in the Park, where they light up all the park at Cotton Centre, Cotton Park. That's happening tomorrow. Then, MacKenzie Produce is sponsoring a free movie at Town Hall; that's a Christmas movie. All family is welcome. Take your pillows, your pajamas; anything like that. That is happening on Friday night, and then on Saturday, we're welcoming Santa Claus to Stratford. Looking forward to that.

Lots going on, and it's going to be a fun weekend around Stratford this weekend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

It is a pleasure to rise here in the Legislature this afternoon. Certainly want to welcome all to the gallery that are here with us today, and say hello to everybody that's watching in from up west in District 26 Alberton-Bloomfield.

November is Diabetes Month and I just want to give an acknowledgement of Diabetes Canada, the great work that they do, and to note that there is a diabetes education support line through Diabetes Canada: 1-800-BANTING.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Members

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

O’Leary Community Seniors Cooperative Ltd.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Have you ever heard of the saying, “Good things come to those who persevere”? Well, the Community Seniors Co-operative Ltd., serving O’Leary, should have this as their motto.

An idea formed in 2014 after the MLA and then-mayor of O’Leary discussed future community needs and the aging state of the existing community care facility. Concerns were raised about what would happen if this building ever closed.

A group of residents gathered to discuss the needs for seniors in the area. O’Leary has long-term care beds located at the Margaret Stewart Ellis wing of the Community Hospital and has designated seniors independent living apartments. The need for services in between these services was very apparent.

Community care homes provide a wide range of care and services to residents. The Lady Slipper Villa has provided these services for years, but times change. Currently, people want private rooms and their own washrooms.

After a multitude of committee and public meetings, incorporation for a not-for-profit co-operative, the donation of land, finding funding sources, and the project has doggedly plowed ahead.

Despite these inflationary times, this group has proven to lenders it has the expertise to deliver a multimillion-dollar project in our community. The board, led by the inaugural meeting attendee, Sally Lockhart, overcame many hurdles, and ground was finally broken in October 2022.

Thanks to Sally Lockhart, Fran Lewis and John Martin, and later joined by Ronnie MacWilliams, June Easter, Rick Cameron, Mike Adams, Bruce Smallman, Bill Smith and Judy MacIsaac, their dream of an

affordable community care facility never wavered, and all the former board members who have passed away or had their terms expire, they all displayed perseverance.

We all look forward to the final step of moving into this facility, which is anticipated for early 2024.

I would also be remiss if I didn’t acknowledge the work of constituent, Jordan MacDonald, the group’s first project manager who provided expertise for funding, and to Egmont MP Bobby Morrissey for his guidance and interventions at the federal level.

No project becomes a reality without a person to champion the cause. Sally Lockhart deserves more kudos than I can give her for her efforts in making The Willows community care facility a reality. I look forward to more official announcements in the future.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Howard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Okay, members.

PEI’s Budget Process

Mr. Howard: I’ve sat through many budget debates here now, and I have to admit, I see some issues.

At first, it was the questions being asked and the answer being, “I’ll bring that back for you,” yet nothing would come back. Then we’d vote and carry on. That’s gotten better, as the information often does indeed come back now.

But the issue that creates the need to “bring that back” could be addressed far more effectively by having the deputy ministers present for budget debates. Then, we can ask questions, get informed answers, and make a decision on whether to support expenditures or not. Seems pretty straightforward.

The capital budget does not even have the minister responsible for the capital request available. In this case, we often have heard the response, “I’m just the finance minister.” Exactly; the Minister of Finance does not know the answers to many of the in-depth questions relating to all of the other departments.

I urge those who can enact needed changes to do so. We should be looking at best practices elsewhere and incorporating those processes into ours here.

It would strengthen our democratic process and encourage much more transparency. We should all be in favour of that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Child Care Spaces in PEI

Ms. Lund: Mr. Speaker, if you told the story of your struggles, and in response, got packaged talking points about how great things were, would you feel like you were being taken seriously? I’m increasingly aware that this government is more interested in sounding capable than they are of being capable.

I hear from families all the time who cannot find child care spaces. They are desperate. One is a new mother and a teacher, and she’s due back to work in December, but despite the fact that she put her name on the list when she found out she was pregnant, she’s still told that there are 200 names on that list ahead of her.

An Hon. Member: Jeepers.

Ms. Lund: She knows she can’t afford to take more time off of work. She’s watching, as the minister of education glosses over her concerns and says we’re leading the country on child care, and while the Premier supports her with repeated vows.

The concerns of this woman and the 200 families ahead of her are not concerns of this government.

I hear from teachers in school all the time who tell me their one wish is that school

supports would be provided for the students in need without having to beg for them so those children would have their best shot. One school spoke of needing 30 EAs and only being granted nine. The fact that they are still 21 short is irrelevant to the minister, who continues to deliver the talking point about how great things are, while those on the front lines continue to describe feeling helpless.

If you don’t even believe there is a problem, there isn’t much hope that you’re going to be able to solve it.

Islanders deserve a government that is ready to lead.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: End of statements.

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: For our first question, I’ll call on the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

It’s been over two years since the Brendel land report was issued by IRAC, and yet, Islanders have yet to see the contents.

We don’t know if the 13 action items contained in the Land Matters report address all of the concerns and recommendations that came out of the still-secret IRAC Brendel report.

Addressing concerns re: Brendel report

A question to the Minister of Agriculture and Land: How are Islanders supposed to verify that you’re actually dealing with all of the concerns when you still won’t release the Brendel report?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Land.

Ms. Compton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. member, we continue to work with Islanders, with farmers, to ensure that what the Province is doing is right and within the regulations and within the law. We continue to do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Well, as I said in my preamble to the first question, here we are over two years later, and a common refrain from the other side is, “We’re working on it. We’re thinking about it. We’re talking about it.”

Well, this is two years of inaction, and I think there are at least a couple of things that this minister and her predecessor could have done to have shortened this timeframe.

Firstly, the minister could have asked the Access and Privacy Services Office, which she oversees, to provide a redacted report without actually sending it to the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Or, your government could adequately resource that commissioner’s office in order for them to expedite the review of this report.

Availability of Brendel report

To the same minister: Why have you not done either of these things and made the report available to Islanders now?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Land.

Ms. Compton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. member, we are following the letter of the law with this. We are working on it in the department to make sure that all farmers follow the rules. We are following the rules of the law.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Well, let me be clear, neither of the suggestions I made there

is breaking the law, minister. These are things you could have done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: Okay, so, staying with land issues and planning concerns, the Special Planning Areas have long been a source of frustration for municipalities and planners.

On April 9th of this year, changes were made to Special Planning Areas without any communication, let alone any consultation with both the Federation of PEI Municipalities or a number of municipalities whose land use plans are profoundly impacted by these sudden changes.

Consultation for changes to SPAs

A question to the Minister of Fisheries and Communities: Is this what you mean when you claimed just the other day to have a good working relationship with the federation and the municipalities?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member should clarify which department he’s to answer the question to.

Special Planning Areas actually falls under department of land and agriculture, and that’s where those special plannings are actually governed.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I don’t really appreciate the answer, minister, because this concern regards a lack of communication between your department and a new municipality which is actively working on their official land use plan. It’s your department who was tasked with maintaining conversations with them.

A second round of significant amendments to Special Planning Areas was made on June 11th, after the department received a letter of concern from the rural municipality of West River about not being informed or consulted on the first round.

Once again, these amendments were made without consultation, without notice, either with the federation or with the municipality.

Another question to the same minister: Why weren't the federation, West River, and other municipalities included in the discussions around the changes being made to Special Planning Areas, or even informed that this process was going on?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Mr. Fox: You know, Mr. Speaker, I've been in this House now four years in this portfolio, which the Premier trusted me with. It amazes me today that the hon. Leader of the Opposition does not know that the role of Municipal Affairs as it applies to the *Municipal Government Act* is to provide governance to our municipalities, ensure our municipalities across this province have the proper governance and procedures in place to govern their municipalities.

The questions he is asking are not even to my department.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm ready to go, Speaker.

Speaker: You're ready to go.

Leader of the Opposition: The rules of the House say that we are allowed to ask questions to any minister that we desire. I have a letter here from the West River community, which is addressed to, indeed, the Minister of Agriculture and Land, but also the minister responsible for communities because you are the one that is tasked with maintaining conversations with municipalities.

So, back to the amendments. In the period of time between the two series of amendments, significant amendments to special planning acts, which profoundly impact these communities, the department was in communication with – your department,

minister – your department was in communication with the Municipality of West River and yet, you made no mention whatsoever of potential future amendments to the special planning areas.

Withholding of critical information

To the same minister: You willfully withheld critical information to a community that you knew would be profoundly impacted by what you were doing. In what world can that be considered to be open or transparent, collaborative or even decent?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Mr. Fox: Well, Mr. Speaker, I meet with the municipalities – 57 of them – probably and talk to them numerous times in a month. I meet with Mr. John MacDougall, and Bruce probably once every month and a half, two months, also, and have a conversation with them.

I can inform this House and I can inform the minister that not once, ever, has the Federation of Municipalities or any municipality brought up formal talks or conversations in regard to the Special Planning Areas, which falls under the Minister of Agriculture and Land. The only city that has ever brought up Special Planning Areas as a concern is the City of Summerside.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, I will be presenting, tabling a letter from the Municipality of West River which clearly displays that what the minister just said is inaccurate. I'll leave it at that.

Speaker: Is that a question?

An Hon. Member: No question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: No question (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: I'll take that as a question, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. leader should actually go out and have conversations with the municipalities in this province. I think the hon. leader should actually get out and meet with the people on the ground, talk to councillors, talk to mayors, talk to the CAOs and actually meet with the Federation of Municipalities when he's required to.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Best question asked all year.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Tame it down.

Ms. Altass: Speaking of conversations, earlier this year, the Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture told the workers gathered at the Federation of Labour's AGM that he would be their voice at the Cabinet table.

I would like to follow up with the minister to know how he is advocating with his colleagues on the priorities identified by the Federation of Labour.

Priorities identified at the PEIFL AGM

Question to the minister: What specifically have you been working on based on what you heard at the PEI Federation of Labour AGM?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the minister responsible for labour and the workforce, I've talked to many employers and employees. We have these conversations at Cabinet all the time about how we can have the reasonable approach for both and striking a balance. That's

important for us and we'll continue to do that to support our workforce.

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

Ms. Altass: So, how you're standing up for workers is nothing specific and having some conversations; that's the answer I heard.

The Federation of Labour passed a resolution calling on the provincial government to bring the paramedic services in-house and have it under the department of health. That sounds familiar. In fact, it sounds like a motion our caucus put forward last sitting and this government unanimously voted against.

An Hon. Member: True.

Changes to paramedic services

Ms. Altass: Keeping that in mind, minister: How do you plan to lobby for this change at the Cabinet table?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's a conversation we'll have with the Department of Health and Wellness, and something that will always be looked at.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Altass: It's not something you've brought forward, then. Okay, good to know.

The federation also passed a resolution to lobby for paid sick days.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Ms. Beaton: Imagine.

Ms. Altass: Because, and I quote from the Federation of Labour, "The pandemic has shown us that all workers, unionized and non-unionized, should not have to choose between going to work sick and getting paid."

Support for paid sick days (further)

Given that you have voted against paid sick leave, particularly the kind that gives job protection, how do you expect to champion paid sick leave for Island workers?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe the bill that the member across brought to the House didn't include unionized workers.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was your department, minister, under the previous minister who removed unions from the bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Altass: Then, it was this current minister that voted against the bill completely. No workers have paid sick days here. None. None legislated.

An Hon. Member: You guys aren't open and transparent.

Ms. Altass: The Federation of Labour passed a resolution to take profit out of long-term care. As they noted, privately run long-term care facilities only worry about profits. To make profits, they are understaffed at all levels of care. That's coming from the workers working in these facilities.

An Hon. Member: Question?

Profits out of privately-run LTC facilities

Ms. Altass: Minister: What have you done to lobby for this change at the Cabinet table?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To go back to the preamble, our department didn't ask them to remove unionized workers –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Thompson: No, my department did not. They should do their homework and then bring that (Indistinct)

Thank you.

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

Ms. Altass: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

I tabled the feedback from the department. I tabled it. It's on record. That came from your department.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Altass: It's tabled. Do your research. Do your homework.

Minister, again, I've given you a list of many things that came up with the PEI Federation of Labour. Very important, very reasonable asks from those workers; from the people working on the front lines.

Improving conditions for Island workers

What are you doing to improve conditions for workers on this Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, we've made the improvements to the Workers Compensation Board. That was a substantial benefit for the workers across this Island. Increasing the targets – this government's increased minimum wage every time it was asked for us to do since we came in here. Fifteen dollars an hour, very soon, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Bernard: Things get a little wilder in here every day.

We've talked a lot this sitting about rural health care, and this government's inability to prioritize it. For rural women, this is especially true. Women's health clinics in Alberton, O'Leary and Souris were closed during COVID and now, almost three years later, there is still no plan to reopen them. This program receives 30 to 50 calls a day and wait time for an appointment is sometimes months.

Closure of women's health clinics

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Why are you okay with some women, including those who live in your district, to have them wait for months; and need to drive for sometimes two hours, to get access to health care?

An Hon. Member: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Hudson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and I do thank the hon. member for bringing it forward.

Certainly, as we've discussed here in the Legislature a number of times, there are major challenges with regard to health human resources. That would be one of the reasons, the primary reason, with regard to the health clinics.

With that though, I will be and have had discussions with Health PEI – who, as you're quite aware, is the operational end of the health care system – but discussions on timelines and how we can move forward to get these up and going again in rural PEI.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Bernard: Here we go again; more discussions. If we've learned anything about women's health, it is that assessments need to be timely, and clearly, that is not a priority for your government.

Much of women's health care is preventative; pap screening, birth control, et cetera. Investing in prevention is fiscally responsible and it is good for women. Female reproductive health issues, when prevention is not a priority, lead to hospitalizations, ER visits, early admissions to long-term care, and shortened life expectancies.

Demanding better health care for women

Question to the minister responsible for women: Why are you not demanding better health care for women, especially rural women in Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

Ms. Jameson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, I take my role very seriously, and I'm constantly advocating on behalf of all Island women with all of my colleagues here on this side of the House.

I was really pleased that, more recently, our government did roll out the gender diverse people's health strategy. This was a great piece of work. I know there were many stakeholders involved with it, and I know that the health minister is committed to ensuring that that strategy gets rolled out.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bernard: We have one Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. That means that she represents 51% of the population at the Cabinet table, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: That's right.

Ms. Bernard: This minister's job is to understand and stand up for the unique needs of women.

But let's recap.

This minister voted down paid sick days, which women's organizations from across the province were advocating for. She is not

empathetic towards the 2,000 women on the waitlist for child care –

An Hon. Member: No.

Ms. Bernard: – and she is not demanding better health care access for women.

Actions to advocate for supports

Question to the minister: How can you stand in here repeatedly and say you support and advocate for Island women when your actions suggest otherwise?

Speaker: The hon. Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

Ms. Jameson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, hon. member, for posing the questions.

I think that if you ask any of the stakeholder groups that I deal with, I think you would recognize that we have a really good relationship and I'm always there –

Ms. Bernard: You just don't listen to them.

Ms. Jameson: – and I'm always there to listen to them and I'm always there to bring forward their concerns. I value all of their input. I know that my colleagues here on this side of the House do as well.

I know recently, when, for example, the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, they released their PEI Equality Report Card, and government received a B+ grade this year. This is actually the best grade that government has ever received in the history of time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Jameson: And that was released during my time as Minister Responsible for the Status of Women –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Jameson: – and I know that there were a lot of different departments involved in that. I want to thank the Interministerial Women's Secretariat for their leadership.

But that being said, there's always going to be more work to do –

Ms. Bernard: You think?

Ms. Jameson: – and I am going to continue to advocate for Island women.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Mr. Speaker, this government partnered with the Construction Association of PEI to expedite repairs to homes and businesses with damage caused by Fiona.

Expedited repairs from Fiona damage

Question to the Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture: How many Islanders have signed up to this program, and how many have actually had the needed repairs completed?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, member.

I'll have to get that data and bring that back.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are so many tarps on roofs across this province, so many of them, meaning many Islanders are waiting for contractors to get the repairs done. They are heating their homes that don't have insulation in them. They're not going to be able to afford to do that all winter long.

We heard an article earlier this week where they were saying that it's probably going to be next spring. The cost of heating these homes this winter is going to be impossible.

We don't have enough contractors in Prince Edward Island to handle the workload, and Islanders cannot afford to pay the expenses of bringing people to the Island to do that.

Support for displaced Islanders re: Fiona

Question to the same minister: Islanders that are displaced from their homes; they need help. What will you do to get them back into their homes before Christmas?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last night, actually, I was talking to Sam Sanderson and had a great conversation with him. He's the CEO of the Construction Association on Prince Edward Island here.

In our conversation, we talked about the insurance work being done, and the amount of crews that are here doing it. There are crews from Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia.

He did warn; he said not all are great, but the ones working with the insurance companies are doing a great job, and we're getting through this. He said it's going to take a while, but the damage was so severe that he understands that, and he expects that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Work continues on the child, youth and family services act, the proposed successor legislation to the *Child Protection Act*. The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate has been advocating for a preamble in the new child protection legislation, and I quote, "that clearly situates the child at the centre of decisions", end quote, among other things.

Government has not committed to such a preamble and the advocate has warned this would be a step backward from our current legislation, particularly from a human rights perspective.

Implement recommendation from CYA

A question to the Minister of Social Development and Housing: To further the best interests of children, will you commit here today to implementing this important

recommendation from the Child and Youth Advocate?

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

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, hon. member. Great question.

One thing we're doing, I believe it's every week right now, is meeting with the child advocate. I was in a meeting there last week and we're going over this exact bill.

I committed to the Child and Youth Advocate that that bill will not come to the floor until he is 100% satisfied, and that's what we're working towards.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Howard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Causeway Bay Hotel was sold in a private sale that the minister said he learned of after the fact. He said he had an offer on the table to purchase it within days of the purchase.

I met with the new owners recently and learned that there was no official offer ever made to them. I know the minister had indicated he was in negotiations to purchase the building up to very recently. I am told, still, no offer came.

In Nova Scotia, there's a \$12 million, 60-unit affordable housing solution purchased mostly with federal money from the Rapid Housing Initiative. It includes provincial supports on site, including a nurse, addictions counsellor, personal care staff, and housing support workers, open by the end of the year.

Official offer to buy Causeway Bay Hotel

A question to the minister: Summerside is in desperate need of affordable housing. Was there ever an official offer made to the new owners of the Causeway Bay Hotel?

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

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

About 10 days ago, we had met with the owners of Causeway Bay, but I'll back up before that meeting. What took place is when we heard word of this, I had no negotiations with the owners at all, but our legal team did reach out to the owners. There was a price tag put forward from the owners, which was drastically high, and we didn't proceed any further.

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

Mr. Henderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

In the spring operating budget, government announced an investment to create a float pool of 25 registered nurses that would fill short-term vacancies throughout the province.

Our big city health guru, minister, bragged this would resolve unsafe protocols in our health facilities. These float nurse concept, they also did this without consulting with the PEI Nurses Union.

Less than a year ago, there was a hundred nursing vacancies. Today, there is 146.

Filling float pool nursing positions

Question to the minister of health: How many of those 25 float pool nursing positions have been filled to date and even if – could you tell me, did anybody even apply?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I know that the float nurse positions were advertised. To give an exact number on which ones have been filled, I would have to go back and bring that back.

I'd be happy, as soon as I can get that, I'll give the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness a call immediately and give him the information.

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

Mr. Henderson: I can save him the call because it's actually zero that they've actually filled of those positions. I did hear that one person did apply and was interviewed and turned the job down.

Also, yesterday, during the supplementary estimates, we found out that there is going to be six new nursing position seats at UPEI in the nursing program; another promise that we're told won't be fulfilled until after the next provincial election.

Increase to nursing seats at UPEI

Question to the minister: Can you confirm that this initiative remains on track to be followed through on, and why did it take you four years to increase the seats to 48?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

The hon. member gave a glowing and a tribute that I agreed with, with regard to The Willows, a new community care facility. He asks how come it took us so long to do something; the initiatives that we have taken for training health care workers. He referenced in his statement that it started back in 2014, his negotiations. 2019, three years later, we are the ones that were able to work with this group to make sure that that community care facility is becoming a reality.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness, your second supplementary.

Mr. Henderson: At least we got ground broke, Mr. Speaker. I will say that this minister – I did hear that there were a lot of impediments that the Province put up, but in the end, it did get done.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: And of course, yesterday, we saw another failed initiative by this government, pulling the *Health Services Payment Act* after they realized the harm

that it could pose to rural PEI. The minister's big city health guru wasn't happy about it, saying it happened due to fearmongering and a political misinformation campaign.

Feedback on HSPA amendment

Question to the minister: Is this what you think of the amendment feedback provided by your constituents, and do you still have confidence in Dr. Gardam? Because it sounds like he doesn't have confidence in you.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question and the work that the minister has done under the most difficult circumstances probably that a minister of health and wellness has ever faced in this province.

We put forward a bill, as everybody knows in here, which was really designed to try to make it easier for Health PEI to hire more doctors faster in the province. Some of the suggestions that have come forward was that some of the unintended consequences might be that there could be a future erosion of health care in Prince Edward Island.

I think there has never been a premier in this province who has tried to be more collaborative and listened more. I don't want anyone on Prince Edward Island to think, under my leadership and under the leadership of the minister, that we would allow for that to happen. So, we've decided to pull it back to try to make sure we can take that input and make sure we can put those individuals who are concerned at ease.

I understand the question from the hon. member. I know what he's saying and what he isn't saying. He knows that we will not, this government will never do that. He has to sit back and go to the steps and defend closing three hospitals and seven schools, Mr. Speaker. I like our record a little better than that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McNeilly: Well, here are some questions on your record.

An Hon. Member: Let's go. Let's go.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. McNeilly: Mental health is becoming a critical topic, especially in my district. This government was handed a 10-year mental health and addictions strategy that runs from 2016-2026. However, when I try to find a progress report, none is available.

They were also given a detailed report called Mental Health and Addictions Master Program Vision, published in 2018, that serves as a roadmap to improving five main areas. The very first one and the most important one is access to primary issues that our Islanders are struggling with.

MH&A research centre achievements

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: You launched a mental health and addictions research centre that has been operating for over a year. Minister, what has the research centre achieved over the last 14 months that helps Islanders access frontline mental health and addictions services?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Hudson: Well, Mr. Speaker, with regard to the research centre and what it's accomplished and the papers the researchers have done, I only have very few seconds here, so I will bring that information back and I will table it.

But the hon. member, he speaks about a progress report. Well, I'll give a brief progress report right here.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hudson: Mental health and addictions single point of access line, mobile response units, addictions extended care, structured mental health programming, construction of the MHA ED short stay and emergency unit at the Queen Elizabeth, the PEI Alliance for Mental Well-Being, and Mr. Speaker, if I

had a bit more time, I could go on. So, that's just a little progress update.

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

Mr. McNeilly: All you needed to do is say that we got better access for Islanders, and you didn't. And all those things contradict those things.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. McNeilly: All those things contradict those things, minister.

An Hon. Member: Way better.

Mr. McNeilly: In the throne – no, no. This is very serious.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. McNeilly: The throne speech last February stated, and I quote: "...government will establish the PEI Centre for Mental Well-being... The Centre will provide government the essential feedback and guidance to ensure our mental health services are responsive to the needs of the community."

Instead, the government launched the PEI Alliance for Mental Well-Being. As far as I can tell, they're basically administering a grant program instead of providing access.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Premier King: Oh, my God.

Setting up of well-being alliance

Mr. McNeilly: Question to the minister: Why was it necessary –

Premier King: Wow.

Mr. McNeilly: – to set up a separate organization to do what the United Way could do, thereby saving funds that could go directly to accessing mental health? Because that's what you came out –

Speaker: Question.

Mr. McNeilly: – with at the beginning of this. So, why didn't you set it up that way, minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Hudson: Well, Mr. Speaker, I do have a great deal of respect for the hon. member, but what I cannot get my head around is why he is so against NGOs, our hard-working NGOs, completely against them.

He basically takes the Alliance for Mental Well-Being and casts a shadow on them, the great work that they're doing, the hard-working employees that they have there, the partnerships that they have developed with our communities right from tip to tip on this Island.

It really troubles me that the hon. member, who I say, I do have a great deal of respect for, but I just cannot get my head around why he goes down this road.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, your second supplementary.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. McNeilly: Simple. It's pretty simple. I want better access, for the people that I represent, to mental health. I don't see it through that, and the United Way is set up, so I don't know where the minister's going with this.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: (Indistinct)

Mr. McNeilly: Minister, you've closed the PUCCs, you closed Unit 9, you put in day programs; where are we going? People want access to mental health. We need it this winter.

The government did launch the mobile mental health units after long delays, and of course, the conflict of interest challenges within your own department along the way, but these units are only open from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Increased coverage for MH&A

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Have mental health admissions to the QEH ER been reduced due to these units, and will you increase this very important coverage to 24 hours?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Premier King: (Indistinct) new leader. (Indistinct) new leader (Indistinct)

Speaker: The minister has the floor.

An Hon. Member: Wow.

Mr. Hudson: As the hon. member knows, it has been an extremely challenging time, the last two and a half, three years. When he comes forward with questions like this – he can put it on me, but what it reflects on, unfortunately, very unfortunately, is the extremely hard work that the staff in my office, that the staff at Health PEI do, day in and day out.

I had reiterated a number of initiatives that we, that our staff, my staff, have been able to accomplish during probably the most difficult, challenging times in health care in a century. They've accomplished this, and I'm darn proud of it, and we'll continue to make accomplishments.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

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

Increasing the scope of practice for health care professionals in our province is one way to ensure the sustainability of our health care system, but another avenue we must consider is incentives for health care workers who upgrade their education. This needs to be done in a way that is accessible and pays respect to the previous experience that these professionals already have.

Take LPNs, for example. It takes half the time to train an LPN compared to an RN, but for an LPN to go back to school to be an RN, it takes them another 3 and a half full years of education, and tens of thousands of dollars.

Path for upgrading education for LPNs

Question to the minister of health: Why haven't we looked at ways that we can make it easier for our LPNs to upgrade their education that respects the high-quality training that they already have?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Hudson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Great question, great question. This morning, I actually had a meeting. There's been discussions going on with regard to this for some time. We are getting very close, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, very close to being able to launch that exact program.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Mr. Perry: Well, thank you very much for taking my advice.

The ability and the support to advance in your career is a huge pillar to retention in any sector. Another example is registered nurses wishing to seek a specialization certificate in their specialty through the Canadian Nurses Association.

This process can cost up to \$1,500. They receive no financial support from the government, they don't even get paid for having it, but some public jobs require them to have it.

Lack of support for upgrading education

Question to the same minister: Why is our system currently not supporting or recognizing individuals who take it upon themselves to seek professional development and provide a higher level of care to Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

It almost seems like the hon. member is starting to think like a Progressive Conservative again.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Hudson: It really does. Good questions coming forward. Good questions. Good ideas. It's unfortunate, though, that with regard to the LPN transition program through for an RN – did we take his suggestion? I'm not sure. Maybe he suggested it back when he was on the PC caucus, I'm not sure, in opposition, but it was the first suggestion that I've had from him.

But Mr. Speaker, certainly do want to take the suggestions that the hon. member does make and take them to heart, and I'd be happy to have a discussion with him moving forward.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, your second supplementary.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can say I've always been progressive.

Another layer to consider is RNs wanting to become NPs, which we desperately need in this province. The problem is the NP program is another two years of full-time study that is really impossible to do while working full-time, only to make roughly \$10 an hour more with a substantial increase in responsibility.

Address barriers for RN advancement

Question to the same minister: We need to recognize how all these pieces connect to each other. Will you commit to developing a government initiative that respects the trained professionals we currently have and address the barriers they face for professional advancement in this province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Hudson: Again, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank the hon. member for the question.

Absolutely, you look at some of the initiatives that we have taken with regard to providing financial support to our LPNs through SkillsPEI, free tuition for our RCW trainees, and I have to give a tremendous amount of credit. I know that there's a number of RNs right now that are taking the nurse practitioner course and continuing to work full-time. It's a heavy burden for them, without a doubt, and I give them tremendous credit for that.

But again, on this side of the House, we're always open to good ideas regardless of where they come from. I do appreciate the good ideas that the hon. member has put forward here this afternoon.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Our public libraries are an incredible resource. Our libraries are more than just books and aisles of bookshelves. They are community assets, incubators for knowledge, inspiration, and creativity; a great investment by any measure.

Spending to support public libraries

Question to the Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning: Minister, how much does the government spend annually to support our public libraries?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning.

Ms. Jameson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This question is music to my ear. I'm glad the hon. member shares the same passion for libraries as I do.

Currently, our annual budget for our libraries is three and a quarter million dollars to support the 25 libraries across the province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's great to hear. Unfortunately, right now, there are no public libraries really up on the North Shore of PEI in the central area. The closest ones to my district really are in Hunter River; we have one in Breadalbane. That is in my district.

In North Rustico, we have a new wellness centre that's being built. We heard last night that the Mount Academy is looking at building a student centre. There may be space available for community use. In fact, they said that's one of the goals they have with their student centre.

One of the ideas that was brought forward last night by an engaged community member was providing library space.

Process for new library

Question to the Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning: What type of process is involved when a community wishes to site a public library location in the community?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning.

Ms. Jameson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We certainly are open to receiving and reviewing community proposals if there's a desire to open a new library. There's obviously a number of factors that are looked at in terms of determining a location, the biggest being the catchment area. As the hon. member suggested, there is a library in Hunter River currently and Breadalbane, Kinkora, Crapaud. We also look at the usage at the local libraries.

But that being said, I'm happy and I know the staff within our libraries would be happy to receive a proposal and further those discussions around potentially one in Rustico.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, your second supplementary.

Mr. Trivers: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

According to the government website, there are three public library locations that offer bilingual service.

The Rustico area is, of course, a bedrock of Acadian heritage, and this would be a great opportunity to extend offerings of bilingual services within libraries.

Support for public bilingual library

Question to the Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning: I think you're very agreeable to this, but just for the record, will you commit to having your department work with the community and any proposals they submit to explore the potential of seeing a bilingual public library location in North Rustico?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning.

Ms. Jameson: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I will commit to that. The department will commit to it. Really looking forward to it, and I'm really pleased to see your passion around libraries.

Thank you for bringing the questions forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thanks to a COVID advocacy group in New Brunswick, we now know that provincial health agencies have been receiving Public Health Agency of Canada reports since May 2021 or earlier that clearly provide evidence that COVID infections cause chronic long-term health outcomes.

Some of these outcomes are alarming. You've heard me talk about them before: increased risk of heart issues, stroke, diabetes, damaged immune system, brain fog, and more.

But what we have not heard is any communication from government about the

true magnitude of risk of these long-term health complications from COVID infection.

Sharing long-term effects from COVID

Question to the minister of health: Your government has known for months that Islanders were at real risk of chronic illness through COVID infection, but you have done nothing and stayed silent. Why aren't you sharing this critical information with Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I hear a question like this, and to me, what I read into that question is that the opposition, they do not have faith in the information that is provided, put out there from CPHO, from our Chief Public Health Officer; Chief Public Health Officer who has guided us through the most difficult times that we have seen in health in, as I had said earlier this afternoon, in well over a century.

With regard to long COVID, I am not going to stand and say that we're going to have clinics, but I do have complete confidence in the direction that we are guided in by CPHO.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Actually, the communication decisions don't come from CPHO; they come from government. The CPHO makes recommendations, but the decisions are made by government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bell: Meanwhile, the federal office of the Chief Science Officer has advised very clearly the public health response to COVID-19 needs to adequately address the long-term effects of SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Today, COVID-19 prevention and self-isolation order expires. This expiration of this order will significantly increase the risk of health and economic harms to Islanders.

Expiration of COVID self-isolation order

Question to the minister of health: When we know that COVID-19 reduces not only quality of life but life expectancy, why would your government entertain the removal of the most basic of community protections?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Hudson: Again, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, we take our direction, we take the advice of the experts in here. I'm not sure, it would seem across the way that we have a lot of experts over there.

What we've heard here is that, yes, we have experts with regard to long COVID. Earlier, and yesterday, we heard that we have experts that they now are promoting rural health care, but you go back a while ago, the Leader of the Opposition – and I am quoting – stated – this is from the Hansard: "...we need to think of emergency services as being provided in two main hospitals..."

So, I can't get my head around, again, where the opposition stand is with regard to rural health care, with regard to long COVID. We will continue to work with our partners, and we'll continue to take advice from the experts.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: I think it's really concerning that the minister of health is dismissing the written submission from the federal office of the Chief Science Officer from the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bell: I also think it's really concerning that he wants to score political points rather than actually listening and responding to a question about health care of Islanders.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bell: Mr. Speaker, we know the best way to prevent COVID-19 post-acute syndrome is to not get infected, but we can't

turn back time and to reverse infections that have already occurred. There is still time for this government to be transparent about what complications might arise so Islanders can get the health care they need instead of pretending that everything is fine for political gain.

Prevent poor health outcomes re: COVID

Question for the minister: How are you going to support Islanders in accessing the care they need today to prevent these poor health outcomes down the road?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

If there's any ones that are trying to score political points on the back of health care, it's the ones across the way here while we work hard on them on this side.

What I will do is I will bring back and table all of the information, the research – and I'm sure that there's realms of it – but I'll also bring back and table the information that I have been provided with, as minister, from experts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: So, while you're searching Hansard back to 2018, people are getting sick.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bell: Meanwhile, in Ontario, the Ontario Science Table has actually gone and done a study to produce estimates of what their province's COVID infections mean for their health care burden, which includes more doctor visits and other interactions with the health care system. We're actually going to be tabling that later, as it's not just health care cost; it's an economic cost.

Health professionals are suggesting that the immune system damage from COVID is helping to drive the surge of sick Canadians

going to already overburdened emergency rooms.

Increased health costs re: long COVID

Question to the minister: Can you table any analysis of the expected increased costs to health care as a result of runaway COVID infections, and whether it makes sense medically or economically?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Hudson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's always great to hear the official opposition changing their tune from being against Ontario to being supportive of initiatives Ontario is taking. As I had said here a moment ago, though, I will certainly go back, get whatever information that there is, and I will bring it back and I will table it.

Thank you.

Speaker: End of Question Period.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Hon. members, through Question Period, I've noticed a few words that were used, and as you know, I hate interrupting people during Question Period, like a lot of members do.

“Inaccurate” was used; “fearmongering” word was used; and actually, “flipper” was used.

So, hon. members, be aware in the heat of the moment with our words. Just keep in mind.

Statements by Ministers

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

Salvation Army Home Heating

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's been a lot of negativity in here today, so I want to talk about some positive announcements (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, it's no surprise as we prepare to turn the calendar to December, the weather is starting to turn a little colder. The windshield scrapers are out, the shovels are ready, and the furnaces, stoves, and heat pumps in Island homes are going to start.

Our government has been loud and clear: We will do whatever it takes, for as long as it takes, to support Islanders to get through these challenging times.

Last year, I had someone reach out to me for support as they did not qualify for this program with the current thresholds but desperately needed financial support for home heating. This year has seen a huge increase in gas and oil costs along with food and other basic needs. Islanders deserve help now more than ever before. I know that every single member on this side of the House is committed to rolling up our sleeves and doing anything in our power to support Islanders.

I believe that no one should have to make a decision between turning on their heat on a cold morning and buying nutritious food for their family or purchasing needed medications.

That is why I am pleased to announce significant investments in the Home Heating Program offered by the Salvation Army.

We are making changes to the program thresholds and the amount of money households can access. We have increased thresholds by \$10,000 for single individuals and 15,000 for families, respectively.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay: Now, a single person with an annual income of 45,000 or less or a household with an income of 60,000 or less will be eligible to receive \$1,200 in financial support to go towards costs in home heating through oil, electric, or wood heating methods.

Since 2021, we have more than tripled the amount an individual or family can access through this program. With these changes, we know this program will support almost 14,000 Island households, who I know could easily use the help this winter season.

The last few months have not been easy for Islanders with the cost of living increasing, and government will continue to do everything we can to ease the burden on Islanders who are in the most need of support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, minister, for bringing this forward. This was something that, I think, we asked for in Question Period and it has been talked about quite a bit in the media. Thank you for this.

It is really important that we're listening to Islanders and that we understand that they're having to make some really crucial decisions. When you hear things like people having to choose between medications, choose between food and electricity – you know, home heating oils are really crucial as we consider that people need to heat their homes.

Even more concerning to me is what was brought forward earlier by the member from Mermaid-Stratford with the amount of people with tarps on their roofs. Somebody mentioned this morning on the other side, and I was thrilled to hear you talking about making connections because it's something that – everything is connected and sometimes, it's very frustrating when it doesn't seem that people understand that. It sounds as though that you're starting to understand over there that things are absolutely connected.

Someone reached out to you a year ago and you're getting to it now, showing that reaching out and talking to government is crucial to things moving forward. I just wish we could do that a whole lot faster. We talk about, you know, the government's there to support all Islanders and ease the burden, and then I just can't help but think of our unhoused Islanders and how I wish we had that same level of support for them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McNeilly: This is a much-needed announcement across the board. We hear that people have used this program. It's getting a lot of money out there and I'm glad the thresholds are done.

Is that announcement going to make everything whole? I don't think so. I think that we're heading into territory right now that – I'm very worrisome for Islanders but we needed to get this. One of the things that I hear about the program is that once you've accessed it, that's it. You can't go back and reuse the program, obviously. I'm worried about some need-based things right now because the price of fuel has skyrocketed.

I'm glad for this. I'm glad for families. We've got to look at, do we have enough staff there right now to deal with demand? People are coming in and saying can I get this? I need this. It's very time sensitive, it's very important. But they don't get calls back in time because there's a lack of staff. That number is going to increase. We need to get this money out quickly and it's very imperative.

I want to thank the minister. I wasn't too sure about your preamble, minister, but the solidness of this announcement is a start. It's not there and it's not going to make everybody whole. We have to stay on this file for Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Housing Development Challenge Pilot Program

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know that PEI needs more rental housing options and that creating more rental units help to provide greater choice to tenants.

The programs we have in place help to support development, but don't take into consideration the recent challenges both

tenants and developers are facing. Creative and innovative methods are required to face a new set of challenges we didn't have in front of us two years ago or even last year.

Collaboration with the community partners and key stakeholders is key to bring forward viable solutions to complex challenges. Over the last few months, I've had the opportunity to sit down with various developers and talk about what kinds of challenges they are having in creating housing units.

I'm pleased today to announce a program to help address some of these concerns. The Housing Development Challenge Pilot Program will be offered through Finance PEI and provides 2% financing options – that's right, Mr. Speaker, 2% loans –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay: – along with property tax rebates for any non-profit, private developer, or community-service based organization seeking to build rental properties in urban or rural communities.

Government is investing \$50 million –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay: – into the Housing Development Challenge pilot with 20 million set aside for applications for rural projects and \$30 million set aside for applications for urban projects.

Applications will open on December 8th and be on a first-come, first-served basis. The pilot program will run for one year or until the funds have been fully committed to projects.

I believe in giving people what they need to succeed, and this program has the capacity for great success. And the most important thing is that the outcome of this program will create new homes for Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There must be an election coming, all these announcements.

Why couldn't we have announced all of these things sooner? As we consider the challenges that we have in housing, absolutely, it's important that we build new housing. But I guess the first question that popped into my mind is, is this financing tied to affordable housing contracts –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bernard: – because these units are going to mean nothing if people can't afford to live in them.

It also comes to my mind, when we were talking about supports for landlords, developers, there were four challenges that they brought forward. I'm not sure exactly how that ties into –

Mr. MacKay: That's a separate program (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Bernard: – building. Great. It's a new, different program coming, I guess.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Bernard: See, election is looming.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Bernard: As long as we can ensure that these are affordable units and we don't just keep building and hoping they will come, because they can't come because they can't afford it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McNeilly: Obviously, there's – we don't have very many details. We're just hearing about this for the first time, but a pilot program, a year-long pilot program, I'm not sure if this is going to be studied, if we're going to look at this, but you didn't have an option.

You know you needed to come out with this because you haven't built any housing on this Island. This government has not built enough housing on this Island. You're coming out at the last minute and you're

coming in with a program that is just being thought about now. I'm worried because we've seen programs out of this government on the back of napkins before and that's very much what this looks like to me.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McNeilly: We all want more housing. Is this the way we're going to do it? Obviously, it's in the details. I'm glad to see some housing options but the relationship has been broken, or it's very much close to being broken with this government and the people that need to build. Hopefully – all I'm saying is hopefully – you can bring it back with this, but we need it and we need housing on Prince Edward Island. Let's see, let's see. We're rolling the dice here and nobody knows what's going to happen.

I guess, congratulations, minister.

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

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, the negative – I'm just amazed, the negativity in here today. These are good announcements.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Investments in Social and Transitional Housing

Mr. MacKay: I'm excited to rise with one final housing announcement for the today.

Earlier this month, I was honoured to attend the grand opening of CMHA-PEI's modular housing complex at 203 Fitzroy Street. We've had great success in our first modular builds on PEI, which is why I'm pleased to share that the PEI Housing Corporation will proceed with a modular build on Lefurgey Avenue in Summerside for a 39-unit seniors' complex.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay: This complex will support seniors on the social housing registry and will be in addition – in addition, Mr. Speaker – to the 31-unit family housing complex on the same site that's going to be built.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Good work.

Mr. MacKay: We know more social housing is needed across the Island and with a vacancy rate of 1.5%, which the previous administration caused, in Summerside, these builds will bring 70 units online to those on the social housing registry.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay: That's not all, Mr. Speaker.

We know that there are many points on the housing continuum that require additional investment and that more transitional housing is needed to create stable living environments for Islanders who need it.

The site of Smith Lodge at 35 Weymouth Street will see an additional 13 units to be constructed beginning in Spring 2023. This build will be in addition to the existing units.

These units will complement Park Street emergency shelter and help to alleviate the pressure on emergency shelter systems.

These units are a part of record investment we made in this year's capital to invest in hundreds of units across the province in communities large and small, rural and urban, to help increase our housing supply and get us back to a healthy vacancy rate of 4%.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay: We're not wasting any time. We're going full steam ahead –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: – and you'll be hearing much more –

Premier King: Full steam.

Mr. MacKay: You'll be hearing much more in the coming days and weeks and more projects like this to take on the housing challenges our province is facing.

We know that when people have access to housing, they feel better and do better. I'm

committed to giving people what they need to succeed, and a safe, warm place to sleep.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Mr. Speaker, we must have minister Kris Kringle in the House today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lund: I will tell you, if either of the two ministers who had this file before him had been half as interested in seeing housing in Summerside, these 70 units would be built right now, and we'd have people in them. But we don't. Seventy units is a whole lot better of an announcement than 31, I'll tell you that.

But I look forward to seeing the details on this because we know the housing registry in Summerside –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Lund: – is expansive, and we are not going to get to a 4% vacancy rate with just 70 units. So, keep them coming, minister, keep them coming.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Premier King: (Indistinct)

Mr. McNeilly: I'm getting (Indistinct) –

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. McNeilly: I'm getting exhausted over here.

Mr. Myers: Get somebody else to respond.

Mr. McNeilly: I just hope these get built on a – when the tender goes out, please apply to have these housing units built. I know that's been a weak spot with this government, but these units need to be built, and I'm glad to see the announcement for Summerside.

A couple other things in there.

Transitional housing is very important, and as we've been talking on this side of the Leg, it's very important. You lost transitional housing units at the Queens Arms. You are negative down on transitional housing units. You can't use Smith Lodge to say we're building – stomp our foot on the floor – when you're closing down Deacon House out of Smith Lodge.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) negativity.

Mr. McNeilly: Yeah, you know what? You can make it about negativity. I'm talking about follow your own plans, minister. You're not following your own plans.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McNeilly: You are not following –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. McNeilly: You are not following your own plans. You're making up plans on the fly. We want to support you over here, but when Smith –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. McNeilly: Well, what do we support? When you announce Smith Lodge as a 28-unit unit –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. McNeilly: – 28-unit three years ago, and you only put nine beds in there, it was announced for a 28 – the guy sitting right beside you announced it for a 28-unit. Never got done. You're not even getting up to 28 units with this, and you're building onto that.

What are they going to do at Deacon House? What are they going to do, the people living at Deacon House? Are they going to have access to the units right now?

Transitional housing is important, but it needs to be supported, minister, and I'm not sure the supports are there. I want to get behind that. I want to get behind this happening. But don't say in an announcement that you're going to announce transitional housing units when

your government has failed for three years along the way.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: One after the other.

Mr. McNeilly: Make sure the staff is there. Make sure the supports are there, because there's nothing more important than transitional housing units. Make sure when the units get available and the scattered sites are there that are being done with the Salvation Army, that supports are given to the people in the units. That's where this government has failed.

Please support the people. Please don't announce this – if an election comes, if it doesn't come, please support the people of Prince Edward Island during the hardest times in their lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Residential Unit Development Incentive

Mr. McLane: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my pleasure to rise today to announce a new funding program being offered by the Department of Finance to support housing development across PEI.

The Residential Unit Development Incentive for multi-unit residential buildings, or RUDI, as we call it, will provide property tax rebates for up to five years in an effort to help encourage developers to build new units on PEI.

Through this program, the provincial government will provide the following rebates for eligible developers: a 100% rebate on provincial property tax in year one, a 80% rebate in year two, a 60% rebate in year three, a 40% rebate in year four, and a 20% rebate in year five.

Our private developers provide an essential service to our Island's housing market. We simply cannot build our housing supply without them. We need all types of residential units in this province that are ready and available for Islanders.

We have strategically tailored the eligibility criteria to encourage new builds that are needed in different areas across the province. To be eligible for this program, new buildings in the Charlottetown and Summerside areas will have at least 24 units, buildings in the Cornwall and Stratford communities will have at least 12 units, and all other builds across PEI will have at least four units.

We know that inflationary pressures and supply chain issues have made it very difficult for developers to build new housing that is needed now, so we must do whatever we can with our provincial levers to help encourage Island developers to continue to build during a time of increased pressures and deliver a product that is needed across the Island.

When all is said and done, RUDI will be a significant provincial investment, and in combination with the programs announced today by my colleagues, we will only add to our existing complement of supports. The taxation office within my department will work with the Department of Social Development and Housing as well as Finance PEI to ensure that the process is seamless for our developers.

I want to thank everyone in our development and construction industry for their commitment to addressing our housing supply. You all provide a product that is valued, needed, and very much appreciated by every Islander.

We look forward to working hand in hand with the industry, and those interested can find more information on the provincial webpage in the near future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Here's what the community needs.

The community needs affordable housing.
The community needs housing that

addresses the needs of an aging population of (Indistinct) –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bell: – large, multi-family housing; so, three-bedroom, four-bedroom, five-bedroom housing. They need housing which is accessible as people age and for people with disabilities. They need housing that is pet friendly.

So, it doesn't matter how many units you build, if you're not building units that people can afford to live in, that actually meets the needs that they have as real people with real families, they're going to be empty or unaffordable, in which case, you're throwing your money away.

So, I really hope that this department is putting conditions on this very rich offer, and that is not too much to ask. If you're going to hand money out, you should expect something in return; a contract of an agreement. And a contract of agreement should start with: How much are you going to charge? If you're getting this much of a handout, then that means that those apartments should have conditions with – oh, and by the way, there should also be heat pumps. No oil, no oil furnace. They should be heat efficient so that we're not having to continually fight about providing fair, affordable heating as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm expecting to see the contracts that come out of that finance department and not just the cheques.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McNeilly: I think we're seeing a sense of "hurry up and do a lot" when we've done nothing for a very long time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McNeilly: It's not a surprise. If we're going to go in that direction, the details need to be there. We do need housing, and we have not, and this government has not built adequate enough housing.

This announcement should help. We hope it will help. But make sure that the details are there and we're getting this program rolled out efficiently. It needs to be affordable. We do need more stock, but we need to do it right, and Islanders need to be able to attain those things.

I'll watch for more information on this, but we are in a position where these announcements coincide, and all of a sudden. We needed to see this out of you three years ago, and we didn't. So, you can't catch up that much to housing, as much as you can try, and we will, but everybody's busy and we want to see these housing units be built and they've got to be built in a timely fashion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

Residential Home Heating Program

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a good timing for this, after listening to some of the comments.

Winter is here, and the price of heating homes continues to climb. There are many good reasons why now is a good time to upgrade your home heating system. It's better for the environment and more cost effective in the long run.

But today, I have even a better reason.

Today, I'm pleased to announce the Residential Home Heating Program. This is a new pilot program that will help Island homeowners upgrade their heating system to one that is cleaner and more energy efficient.

The program allows homeowners to borrow funds for costs associated with purchase and installation of the equipment. Finance PEI will provide the financing to a maximum of \$30,000 per property for over a 10-year period. The Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action will reimburse Finance PEI for the interest portion for the loans on behalf of the homeowners. This will result in 0% interest for the borrower.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thompson: More details about the new program can be found on our government's website.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Sherbrooke – or Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: That's a (Indistinct) district.

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

Ms. Altass: That would be a really big district, Mr. Speaker.

Wow, okay. We've got announcement after announcement after announcement today. We're picking up the little bits and pieces of what this might be. I can't help but think after three and a half years of this government, my goodness, it's like you woke up today and you're like, "Oh, we're government".

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Ms. Altass: Let's do some things.

An Hon. Member: I'll give you that one.

Ms. Altass: Of course, it is good to see that there is investment for homeowners to be able to go to clean heating methods, of course. I find myself asking what about renters? We know that about 30% of Islanders are renters. What about those landlords? Will they be helped to make those transitions, because the people who are renters are (Indistinct) but I don't know. I don't know because I don't know the details of the program, of course. I'm just going off of the little snippets here today.

I think there's quite a lot to delve into here. Again, sounds like there's a step in the right direction, but a step at this point is not enough. We should have been well on our way. I guess we'll hear what comes next.

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

Mr. McNeilly: Yes. Here we go.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. McNeilly: We see what – this is a good announcement. Zero percent interest is good. I hear about this –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. McNeilly: – yes, yeah – a lot. Before you give yourself a pat in the back, it should have been done before.

I hear about this often and people want to make those changes and they want to do that, but they get stuck with the price barriers, for whatever reasons. I hope this is accessible and people are there to communicate this along the way, that this program is there. It reminds me of a federal program that's running. It seems like it's maybe mimicked. I'll have to look at it.

We need this in our communities. People want to do this. They just can't afford this at this time, so make this as easy as possible. That's what we're hearing. Let's get clean, PEI, and look forward to the next announcement in about six seconds.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Heat Pumps for Community Halls

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our government has made an aggressive commitment to reach net zero by 2040.

An Hon. Member: Indeed.

Mr. Fox: This target would put Prince Edward Island as our country's leader when it comes to reducing emissions. It would make us Canada's first net zero province.

This target we have set for ourselves, it requires us to make significant investments into our communities.

Today, I'm proud to announce we are expanding the Community Revitalization Program in my department, and this is in partnership with the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action.

This expansion of this program will provide community centres and places of worship with up to \$20,000 of funding that can go towards the purchase and installation of heat pumps.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fox: These are smart investments that just make sense. We must make sure that all of PEI moves towards net zero goals. This is why we are adding places of worship.

This is how we all move towards net zero goals. This means incorporated, not-for-profit community halls in rural PEI can renovate their space with green energy solutions, and I would encourage any community group that fits this program's criteria to contact the community development officer in our department.

As we know, community spaces, they are the heart of our communities. These are the places where they can gather for celebrations, for events, for fundraising, and so much more, so helping them to electrify is the right thing to do.

I am proud that the Department of Fisheries and Communities and the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action could pair up our programs to make sure more funding is available to Island community organizations.

These are actions we can take to make a real difference in the lives of all residents and will require no matching or contribution by the applicant.

An Hon. Member: Wow.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Howard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm feeling like déjà vu may be occurring here a little bit because this sounds an awful

lot like something the minister of energy announced about a year ago.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Howard: There's some small differences but it seems to that it's very much along those lines.

It's very nice to hear that we're going to be encouraging more centres, including our places of worship, to use electricity-based as opposed to fossil fuel-based energy sources. That is a good thing.

The minister mentioned that we have 2040 targets now. Those targets have been in place for many years. I'm wondering why this program's only being announced, re-announced, perhaps, today, almost four years into the minister's mandate.

Here we are with – I mean, the churches and the community centres, they've been dealing with these rising bills all along but it's only now that we're coming into an election year that the minister sees fit to help them transition towards an energy source conducive with our 2040 targets.

While this is a good announcement, minister, they're all good announcements, they're all happening today and they all should have happened years ago, so –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Howard: It's pretty plain to see, Islanders that are watching this today know that this government is just trying to make up for all of their actual inaction that we've seen.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Howard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Henderson: Well, Mr. Speaker, once again, this government seems to be on a little bit of a Santa Claus kick right at the moment. It's great to see lots of things coming out, once again, on the eve of a potential election within the coming year.

But the reality is – and I take this announcement around trying to electrify our community halls – I'm trying to think in my district, I think they all have it already. We've done it under our government, and they've done it under their government, too.

I might add that some of them maybe can use another hall or something or another heat pump, and that's all fine. It's sort of like the generators. They get a whole bunch of generators. They didn't know what to do with them and now we want to see if we can get a few more.

On our situation with our places of worship, obviously that's going to be quite a challenge. A lot of those facilities do require some electrification because a lot of them – I know in my district – are certainly all on oil generation.

But one of the things I think we're going to have to realize as we have all these heat pumps out here, do we even have the electrification capacity to do that. Because I know in place like West Point, we do not. We have to run generators to run our manufacturing businesses in that area and if we're trying to take more and more use of these things – we've also been trying to say we need to reroute power lines. We got problems there on Howlan Road. That's not been fixed yet, either. The list of problems goes on.

I just hope this government will try to make an announcement and deliver on it like it's supposed to because it hasn't been able to deliver anything yet.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

An Hon. Member: Buckle up. Buckle up.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Agriculture Plastic Recycling Initiatives

Mr. Myers: I feel like I've only delivered – by the member from O'Leary there, but I'll go back to delivery again.

Through a new and expanded agricultural plastics recycling program, Island farmers

can keep even more plastics out of landfills. PEI will be the first province in Atlantic Canada with a producer responsibility program for agricultural plastics, which starts tomorrow.

Through programs like this, companies that manufacture the agricultural plastic will take responsibility for the collection and the recycling of the plastics after they are used by the farmers.

PEI is a national leader in programs for recycling and diverting waste from landfills. This new program will divert even more agricultural waste for proper handling to further protection of the environment.

Empty pesticides and fertilizer container recycling programs will continue, along with seed and pesticide bag collection programs. Pilots for bale/silage wrap and twine will expand over the next year. And next year, farmers will have the opportunity to recycle their fertilizer bags.

Cleanfarms will manage the Agricultural Plastic Product Stewardship Program in PEI. In partnership with ag-retailers, they have been delivering industry-funded recycling programs to the province for more than 30 years.

Proper stewardship of plastic waste in all industries is a key part of ensuring a sustainable future for our province. Island Farmers have always played a leading role in environmental stewardship, while continuing to produce world-class products.

Today's announcement ensures that that work will continue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, it's unfortunate that we've had to wait for this announcement to come. I mean, I appreciate –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Bell: – the impact of that but you could have announced it last week or the week

before or whatever. Saying that, this has been one of the challenges that the industry has been facing. We've heard really clearly from farmers that they needed something that was specifically tailored for them and that would look different than our residential program.

I know that one of the other things that we also need to be talking about, though, is how we reduce the amount of plastic overall.

I also hope that the minister and his department are working on, with the industry, on those longer-term pieces around how we can actually change the kind of plastics that we use. I know we're talking about bioplastics as one idea. This is something that, in the short term is going to help us, but longer term, we need to be moving away from those plastics completely. I'm really hopeful that the minister is going to be getting ready for an announcement around that as a longer-term approach, as well.

In the meantime, I'm looking forward to seeing more details on this. Again, like everyone else, it's answer in 30 seconds or less – so, look forward to seeing the details and sharing those with the industry and hearing their feedback on this program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Henderson: I'm having a hard time figuring out – is this Christmas or is it Groundhog Day? It seems like we're repeating the same things over and over again.

Once again, of announcements that seem to be already out there. If I look at the arrangement, there, at trying to deal with some of our plastics in the agricultural industry, there is an organization out there called Cleanfarms that picks up our plastics and works with the Island Waste Management commission to take that plastic and recycle it.

I do know that, when I go to take my agricultural chemical containers back to the distributor that sold them to us, they'll take

them and they shred them and they, once again, do this through Cleanfarms.

So, the reality is, it's a repeat announcement, again, but I will take it as it's good faith. Maybe it can go a little farther, maybe they can deal with a few more of the plastics that weren't utilized in the past, and couldn't be recycled in the past, and will look at trying to, once again, keep our agricultural farms as clean and pristine as we can confidently do. I'm sure that the agriculture community will rise to the occasion and do what they always have done in the past.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Heat Pump Programs

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've had enormous interest in our free heat pump, insulation, and hot water heaters here on Prince Edward Island. Over 1,800-free heat pumps have been installed in Island homes already, and more are on the way. These heat pumps will help Islanders heat their homes in the winter with more affordable and energy efficiency.

Due to the high demand, we know Islanders experience a bit of a wait for this program, but I want to show everyone that we'll get through these applications as quick as we can.

This is no small task – we're talking about installing heat pumps, insulation, and hot water heaters right across Prince Edward Island. But the task is worth it. Islanders deserve the savings on their energy bills, and it is helping us achieve our emissions reduction goal at the same time.

To keep up with demand, we now have 12 heat pump contractors working to install heat pumps. Together, these contractors can install over 500 heat pumps a month, and we're working to add more companies to install free heat pumps as they come forward.

We have also awarded contracts to four insulation companies, and insulation contractors will start in December. They

start by giving qualified homeowners a free energy audit, and then they install the free insulation.

We are also working to add contractors to install free electric hot water heaters, and we continue to think that big to reach the most ambitious climate target in the country.

We will continue to aggressively pursue our net-zero goals while helping Islanders deal with the financial realities we're facing. Once we're through more of our existing applications, we look forward to expanding these free Island programs to even more Islanders. Right now, we want to make sure that we are getting the equipment to those who need it the most.

I want to add that, as I travelled around this summer to environment ministers' meetings and met with federal ministers, our program is heralded as the best program in this country.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The free heat pump program is – and I'm probably going to regret saying this – probably one of the most single, effective things that this government has done to help low-income Islanders –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bell: – yeah, yeah, you're welcome. That's the only one you're going to get, because I've noticed that you didn't mention how many hot water heaters have been installed, because I think the answer is none, or very, very, few.

Mr. Myers: That's not true.

Ms. Bell: The demand right now, that I'm hearing from constituents, is actually the electric hot water heaters. There's a huge backlog there. I would point out, increasing the amount of money that you can get for the heating program – which I noticed was extended, not just for oil, but also to cover other heating bills – is going to be needed

because people haven't been able to transition when they hoped they would.

They were hoping to be able to transition this fall, and instead what they're looking at, is another winter of bills. That money, that you're going to provide, will cover less than one oil tank fill.

We are still having a situation of people who desperately need to be able to transition, and the program rollout has not been effective; particularly for that electric hot water piece.

I appreciate the enthusiasm for it, and absolutely, in theory, great program, great designing. When it does get rolled out, it is absolutely making a difference.

But, let's not get too excited about handing out the gold medals all over the place, because we have, in the meantime, a whole bunch of Islanders who really, really wanted to be – they signed up for this six months ago, and nothing has happened and they're looking at another winter where they're going to have to make really hard choices. With that one oil tank fill – or part of an oil tank fill – that you're going to cover, will get them to Christmas, and then after that, what are they going to do?

We need to make sure that when we plan and announce programs, we actually have the details, we have the people lined up to deliver it. You shouldn't be surprised, when you're offering stuff for free, that people are going to line up and actually ask you to deliver it. The details matter.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Henderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, like the hon. member next to me there, we certainly see this as a positive move in trying to say we want to get people off our oil and carbon-based petroleum products to look at more of electrification, so, that part is all good.

I tend to get a little less enthusiastic than the minister does, regarding the fact that I had constituents calling the other day – I have to

unthaw my water pipes, because they haven't got my heat pump installed, and I applied back in the spring. That's a reality of what's happened.

I will give the minister credit, they have added more installers to add to that list of eligible installers, but the reality was, you had lots of time to have done that.

You already had a list of installers that were eligible to do it for the \$1,200 and \$2,400 grants, why they couldn't have the free ones for lower income –

An Hon. Member: It astounds me.

Mr. Henderson: – once again, astounds me a little bit too.

That's a reality. I do know the electric hot water heaters – I don't know, the Premier seems to think there's 100 installed across the Island. Is that mythical or real? I don't know that answer.

To quote Dr. Gardam- on that, is it mythical or real?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: But the reality is, I know in my district, I have been working diligently with the departments to try to say, can you get some of these installed, trying to say that this one is an urgent one. They have no other heat source, and weather is getting a lot colder.

I know – I think the same thing goes for the free insulation. I don't think there's too many of them installed yet either.

Mr. McNeilly: Oh, no.

Mr. Henderson: So, maybe more recently, they've got some of these programs rolled out, but I would say, you had three and a half years to do that. You've had even announcing the program in the spring. I'll say a little too late, is what I would say, Mr. Speaker.

Thanks.

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

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know we talked to the minister from O’Leary-Inverness, he finally answers his phone after 10 years in government.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. Myers: He’s finally willing to hear what government’s doing wrong. He wasn’t willing to hear it for 10 years.

Speaking of reality – you better plug your ears, because you’re not going to like the reality you’re about to hear.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Ranking on National Efficiency Score Card

Mr. Myers: Thanks to investments in free, energy-efficient upgrades for income-qualified Islanders, we have improved our ranking in the Canadian Energy Efficiency Scorecard. This annual report from Efficiency Canada ranks PEI fourth out of the 10 provinces surveyed, passing Ontario. For the first time, we’re in fourth.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: The scorecard made special mention of our programs for Islanders with low incomes. We invest in free heat pumps, insulation, hot water heaters for Islanders because it’s the right thing to do. It is great to see Prince Edward Island recognized for this work at a national level.

We have consistently improved our score from the first scorecard in 2019, which ranked the province seventh. We’re fourth from seventh since I started this job.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Part of our success is that we have the most ambitious climate targets in this entire country. This year, PEI was also recognized for its transportation energy efficiency programs.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? In transportation efficiency programs, PEI is ranked third in the entire country.

Premier King: No. No.

Mr. Myers: This includes electric vehicle incentives, e-bike incentives, and electric vehicle charging stations.

Premier King: Amen.

Mr. Myers: You know what, Mr. Speaker? When it comes to programs for reducing electricity, we’re second in the entire province. We’re second in the entire province. And for fossil savings, we’re third in the entire province.

Premier King: Let’s go.

Mr. Myers: So, you know what Mr. Speaker? We will continue to pursue our targets aggressively; we will continue to hit the high notes while the members across there hit the lower notes.

While we are pursuing these goals, we will always prioritize the needs of Islanders as we face rising fuel costs and inflation.

To learn more about programs for Islanders that support the province’s net zero goals like free heat pumps, free insulation, free hot water heaters, electric vehicle rebates, e-bike and bicycle rebates, and many more types of financial supports for energy efficiency, visit princeedwardisland.ca/netzero.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Maybe I’ll just stay on my feet, Mr. Speaker. This would be more fun.

I’d be careful about being excited about passing Ontario on any scorecard. I think they’re probably going backwards at the moment, rather than forwards, when it comes to green initiatives; let’s be clear.

I think we need to make sure we thank the official opposition for the ambitious targets that this province has when it comes to net zero –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bell: – but on an overall basis, that scorecard is – in the grand scheme of things, Canada is one of the worst countries in the world for addressing our targets. We need to make sure that we’re mindful that we are doing a really important part. Absolutely, there are programs that are delivering well. It would be great to see zero-emission vehicle targets, for example, to help us with our transportation charges.

In the meantime, we can thank having ambitious targets; we can thank having pressure to make sure that we see people who are low-income, and that we talk about poverty in this House; and you can thank the official opposition for both of those things.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I’m going to have to wave the white flag here or something here, with all these announcements that are coming out there.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: It sounds so good. It just sounds like we’re in a Utopian province here, or something. But I will give the government credit, if they went from 7th to 3rd, that’s an achievement in itself, so I do appreciate that.

I think the reality is, though, when we get into the issues around targets and climate change – we all, in the Legislature, all work towards trying to create reasonable targets. I do think that it’s important; things like the free heat pump.

Probably, it is a little easier on Prince Edward Island to be able to deliver those programs and get them up and running quicker, just based on our size. So, I don’t want to give them too many kudos on their great achievement here, but I will give credit where credit is due.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Okay.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Mr. Speaker, I call Motion 123.

An Hon. Member: Tabling of documents.

Ms. Beaton: Oh, tabling of documents?

Speaker: Oh, sorry.

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

I can forgive you being a little confused today. That was an odd series of announcements. I mean, some of them very welcome, but you never know in this House. It’s an adventure every day.

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a letter from the mayor of the new West River municipality, Helen Smith-MacPhail to the Minister of Agriculture and Land and the Minister of Fisheries and Communities. This is dated September the 8th, and I’m going to read a little bit from this letter.

“The fact that additional amendments were made” – she talks of the amendments made to the Special Planning Areas on April 9th, and then a second set of amendments made later – “The fact that additional amendments were made to the *Planning Act* Subdivision –” and on and on and on, “and those amendments were once again made without notice or consultation with impacted municipalities or the PEI Federation of Municipalities is concerning.”

This is in a letter that they sent to the minister on September 8th.

“Even more so, perhaps, since the Department of Fisheries and Communities officials communicated with our municipality during that interim period [between April and June] –

Speaker: Hon. leader, are you (Indistinct)?

Leader of the Opposition: – and make no mention of the second amendments that were forthcoming.”

Sorry, Mr. Speaker?

Speaker: Do you have a seconder?

Leader of the Opposition: Oh, I’m not quite finished yet, Mr. Speaker. There’s one more sentence.

“It unfortunately reinforces the perception that the province does not place enough importance on transparent communication and therefore we felt compelled to send this second letter.”

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Hon. members, when we’re tabling documents, we don’t get to read the whole letter.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) the rules.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table the *Victims of Crime Act 2021-2022 Annual Report* for the period ending March 31st, 2022 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a report titled “Understanding the Post COVID-19 Condition (Long COVID) in

Adults and the Expected Burden for Ontario,” dated September 2022, as referenced earlier during QP, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table an extract from Hansard, dated 21st of September 2022, which is from the health and social development committee meeting where Dr. Morrison makes it clear that the decisions regarding health communications are made by ministers’ offices, and not hers and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford, 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

Motions Other Than Government

Orders Other Than Government

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

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

I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the 38th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 38, *An Act to Amend the Election Act (No. 2)*, Bill No. 120, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Election Act (No. 2)*, Bill No. 120, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Mr. Perry: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road to chair the Committee of the Whole House, please.

Chair (Z. Bell): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Election Act (No. 2)*.

Promoter, you have a brief description.

Mr. Perry: Sure. Thank you, Chair.

The amendment is based on the federal election act, and it gives the chief electoral officer the ability to legally enter into contracts on behalf of Elections PEI.

Chair: Okay, Perfect. Thank you very much.

Is it the committee's wish to debate this bill clause by clause, section by section, or general questions?

An Hon. Member: General questions.

Chair: General questions, perfect.

Are there any questions?

Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Mr. Perry: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Election Act (No. 2)*.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Perry: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Perry: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Election Act (No. 2)*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the 39th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 39, *An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act*, Bill No. 126, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Mr. Perry: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Clerk: Bill No. 126, *An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act*, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Mr. Perry: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, that this House do now resolve itself into a

Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Winsloe to chair the Committee of the Whole House, please.

Chair (Z. Bell): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled Bill No. 126, *An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act*.

Promoter, do you have a general statement on this act?

Mr. Perry: I do. Thank you, Chair.

This act will amend the *Legislative Assembly Act*. What it does, is it changes the MLA oath to reflect the change of the monarch.

Chair: Okay, perfect. Thank you very much.

Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause, section by section, or general questions?

Some Hon. Members: Carry the bill.

Chair: Carry the bill? Thank you.

Carry The bill is carried.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: You're all scared. You're all scared, yeah. You're all scared.

Mr. Perry: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act*.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Perry: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Perry: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Good job, buddy.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Motions Other Than Government

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

Mr. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time, I call Motion No. 122.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Deputy Clerk: Motion No. 122, Prioritizing the development of a formal solution for distributing emergency financial aid.

Debate was adjourned by the seconder, the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

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

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I had commenced my talk a little earlier on this particular motion, I had certainly highlighted a number of the failings that our government seems to have here when it comes to distributing of emergency funds. We've certainly seen it; like I say, it tends to have a great grasp of being able to deliver potatoes and cheese and gift cards to people, and probably did a pretty good job of cheap flashlights, lavender seeds and potatoes chips. I've got to give the minister of environment and energy, when it comes to generators, they did get them out relatively quickly.

But if you're not in a situation where those are the types of things that you really need in an emergency situation, we've seen failing after failing when it comes to distributing cash resources to Islanders. We've seen this situation with Fiona, which I probably would say couldn't have been a worse fiasco.

I had mentioned here in my previous speech that we had a situation where I had a single mom, three children, and was denied funding. I do want to provide a little bit of an update to the Legislature on that lady's situation. I told her to try to be patient, maybe reapply and see what she can do. She did have a name that was a very common name in my riding, so I don't want to blame everybody in this circumstance, but the fact that there was really no appeal process is what really concerned me on this whole situation.

Anyway, the update is, is that she did get the chance to reapply. She did call a number of times to Red Cross. She informed me this morning that there was at least \$250 transferred into her account today. I'll say that's at least an update on that situation but, her scenario is that she hasn't got the second contribution yet.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: Yeah. But she did say that they told her that it looked like that she was eligible for at least some of that second instalment. I'm going to say with that, I told her, probably still continue to be patient. If it's a case – her concern was that the program might expire before she got her second instalment. I said, well, those are the situations that are out there. I'm sure Red Cross is very busy, and government. Be patient. Maybe let me know in a few weeks of whether she got the money or not and if I have to, I'll try to deal with the government and/or Red Cross to try to see if we can get it straightened out. But if she had documentation that said that she was approved for the second instalment, I'm quite confident that they'll come through.

I still have a lot of people that are dealing with this issue of not getting that money. We can't really determine who's – some of their neighbours have very similar circumstances, similar amount of time of power being out,

similar family sizes where they got it and somebody else didn't.

The big issue, I would say, in all of that is that there needed to be an appeal process. I know the government has said well, the second instalment was not their money. But the reality is that they – it looks like they've given up to close to \$750,000 to Red Cross to administer this program, I would think that the minister would have some contacts there to make a phone call and just say: Can you give us an update? Can you make this process a little more smoother? Can you allow an appeal somehow to verify that?

Mr. MacKay: I did take your advice. I followed up. The federal government hasn't given Red Cross money.

Mr. Henderson: Well, there is somehow, some people are getting it. I don't know where it's all coming from.

Mr. MacKay: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: But the reality is, is that we still are dealing with a program that gets announced, it is delivered by a third party that is getting money from the provincial government and it seems to have been able to struggle. That's why this motion is saying there needs to be some sort of a process to deal with that.

We also dealt with the inflationary payments. I think there's another one around the fuel issues, where we had to go through CRA, the Canada Revenue Agency. The same issues tend to be – there's a long delay. People are getting cheques. They don't know what it's for. They're not sure whether it's federal. They're not sure whether it's provincial. They don't know who to call. Should they be calling their MPs? Should they be calling their MLA?

I find it even hard to try to (Indistinct) all the differences between these programs and I'm constantly asking people which program, and they don't know who they were talking to, and they couldn't understand who they were talking to. The list goes on.

I felt that when it comes to delivering of programs, you need to make it fairly clear for people, especially when they're a mass program where there's quite a bit of

Islanders that would be eligible for that. We've seen that in most of these cases, that there are a lot of people eligible, and it's a large number of households; I think 65,000 households that we're dealing with here. So, it's really important that we deal with that kind of reality.

I think the other component I would make, that we want to have our programs' administration all across Prince Edward Island. It can't be just in Charlottetown or Summerside. We need it in a number of our communities. That's why I thought the Access PEI would have been the perfect deliverer of these types of programs. Even with the volume of cheques that we were to deliver, we were certainly in a situation where – if you had enough people around that they could write those cheques fairly quickly.

These are the types of things that I found that we need to make something a lot more simpler. The one thing I can say, at least in our area, is that Access PEI is where you go to get government services. Anywhere on Prince Edward Island, you should be able to access the similar services. You can drop off your inter-office mail there. You can pick up applications there. There are computers there so people can look something up for you and give you a copy. You drop off your soil samples there. You get your water tested there. There's no reason why they can't be added another task to administer cheques on an emergency basis.

These are the things. And I would argue that the other side of the equation is that if government is trying to get supports out to people and to be fair to people, there are also alternatives here. Some of the things I look at when I come to some of the gas tax issues and high spikes in gas prices: Why not lower the tax a bit on gas? Fair to everybody.

Lower it on HST. The Province takes in 10% on every dollar an item goes up in value. It's taking in large volumes of dollars. If you want to create a deflationary component to the cost of living in Prince Edward Island, drop the price of taxes on some things. We're talking here, there was something, 50 million for this and 58 million for that. The government over there made tons of announcements. Lower the tax on things. Lower the regulations. You're taking

in lots more money when it comes to building permits, to development permits, if you even have to apply for those things to deliver it, and we get all those out of Access PEI. To me, it's the perfect spot.

We also, when we get into situations when we're delivering these emergency funds like what Red Cross did, by having it in Summerside, it made it difficult for seniors, people with disabilities, all those challenges that people had to do or the time that it takes off work to get to work. I always sort of realize, and not to belittle the point about how far it is from O'Leary-Inverness to the Legislature here, but the reality is I have three hours of my day that I have to take to travel to get here. Happy to do it; this is my job. It's my place where I go to.

But for hard-working, everyday Islanders in seafood plants, in potato warehouses, and cheese factories and butter factories like we have in O'Leary, they don't have that luxury of having the time to get to their place of work. Their place of work is in those communities, and to have to go to Summerside or Charlottetown to prove their identity, that didn't make a lot of sense.

Now, I was never opposing that there needs to be some sort of an audit or control over the money that was given out. I have heard some bizarre stories in some cases, but the reality is, we don't want to make it a situation where the whole enforcement process is so complicated that we were reviewing so many people for the amount of potential frauds or mistakes that might have been made.

I looked at, if we were trying to deliver 65,000 cheques and it's taken us, now, what, 10 or 12 weeks, I think we're into on that, we're really boiling it down to 1,500 cheques a day. Could you have had 15 people, 100 cheques a day, could have been hired to deliver and administer that? And you could've done it far more effectively and quicker if you did that at our Access PEI sites. I think that would be pretty simple. Did you have to question or have ID checks on approximately 25% of the people who applied? That seemed a high number.

I think, certainly, there was 75% of those people had no problem accessing the money, and I appreciate that, but the 25% that had

difficulty seemed to have difficulty for a number of factors. They were either lower income; probably the ones most in need. There were situations where there were people that have disabilities. They have single moms. People work low-paying jobs and they have to take time off work to go get a measly \$250; seems way over the top.

So, somehow, these processes got decided upon. I'm sure the government played a role in that. I can't believe we would just say: Here's \$750,000; do what you want with it. I'm sure they had to get some stipulations on how many people to investigate or audit or inspect or whatever the application process was. So, I think we have to do far better, and that's why I think that a motion of this nature seems to make a lot of sense.

As we're moving forward, and all the announcements that were made recently, if Access PEI can be added on to do applications for electric hot water heaters and heat pumps and insulation, I don't think it would be too much to ask an organization like that to be able to have the authority and the ability to administer getting important dollars or resources out to Islanders.

Another thing that I – as much as all of these announcements sounded very positive and good, and it's great to come out with this on the eve of an election, but just because you say it, doesn't make it so. I've made this statement many times here.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: You have to be able to get these things out.

I used that example about the senior, that we had a program for seniors for safety to make sure that the trees were cut and they could get access to the highway. I had a situation where there was a miscommunication, it seemed, between the department of transportation and Access PEI.

Here I am, in the middle; the senior, the constituent of mine, was wondering when they're going to arrive, and I'm saying, well, you'd think they'd be there by now, but they haven't been. So, I said I'll check with the department of transportation. I called the department of transportation: "Well, we haven't been given any names yet." And I

said, well, I thought it was the department that was administering this program. "Well, no, it's not us; it's Access PEI." So, then I say, okay, I call Access PEI, go up and see them because I have an office at Access PEI in O'Leary. "We were collecting the names, but we weren't going out to remove the trees or to cut the branches from near their house and walkway and stuff like that." Well, I say, well, what good is that? "Well, nobody told us that they were coming to do that."

So, anyway, then I put a little bit of a nasty tweet out there and a little picture, and gee, Paul MacNeill picks it up on *Compass*, and all of a sudden, I'm getting calls coming from everywhere. "Who's this (Indistinct)? Where's this location?" I said, well, if you looked at the picture, the civic number is on there, so that would've been easy to solve.

But anyway, the interesting part was, that was on a weekend. I think it was a Friday on the political panel, and all of a sudden, everybody wanted to do something on Monday. And the department of transportation did arrive on Monday, but here's the reality: The community, after seeing my tweet, some of the neighbours came out and they cleaned up the driveway and got that lady to have accessibility.

So, lots of cases, it's certainly a detriment sometimes when government throws its hands into these programs and doesn't deliver on it, then people have expectations. The community really wasn't making much effort because they were thinking that government was going to come to do that. Sometimes, the old John F. Kennedy quote, ask not what your government can do for you but what you can do for your government, can sometimes apply here.

That was an example that I saw. When we announce these programs, we have to make them deliverable. They have to be something that people can access and do and make it fairly simple, and also take into account all the people that have limited accessibility, limited skillsets, literacy skills. All that encompasses a community in a riding like mine. Many of them will reach out to me for help and assistance in that regard and I do what I can to convey the message, make sure they get the proper information.

I think with that, I'll let some other people speak on this particular motion. I do think it's important that this Legislature urge government to provide a report on a formal solution within, I'll say, six months, because weather and things, you just never know when the next big situation. This government seems to be full of tragedy wherever it goes. I keep saying sometimes it's like bad luck follows them around like Schleprock, the cartoon character where there's always a lightning bolt over his head.

Sometimes, you have to create your own good luck and do things right and deliver them appropriately and get people to meet the needs.

With that, I will conclude my remarks here as the seconder of this particular motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think this is a great motion and I just want to speak to it for a few minutes.

I will say this government, yeah, has had some bad luck, let's say, for choice of words. They had a pandemic and a hurricane and then another hurricane, but you would think that they would have learned from the second hurricane by the time it came.

The people who were affected the most from all of this was seniors. They waited. Some of them lost their internet, some didn't have internet, some aren't on social media. It went from seniors getting 250 to some not; seniors getting 250 plus 500 to some not; some getting the 250 and not the 500, and not being told why.

The Red Cross is a very wonderful organization. We ask questions, why did the rules change? Like, people got 250, bang, right off the bat. Other people had to go wait in line to prove their identity. What happened? I talked to a lady, she called me. She got the 250. It took her four weeks to get it because she didn't have e-transfer, where everybody around her got it right away. Then she applied for the 500 and just got refused. You got to come into Summerside. We just can't send it to you.

To the hon. member's comments about access, we have a lot of Access sites on PEI. Why couldn't we have had people go there? Our fire department and our community were around cutting trees out of people's yards and off the road so people could get the roads open because there weren't enough people to do that. That's understandable but there was no coordination. They went and did it out of the goodness of their heart so the neighbour could get in and out of his house. You reported that you had a tree down, but nobody was coming to get it, so somebody had to help out.

The communications, as I indicated, were very cumbersome, not clear. I have, not just seniors, I have younger folks with families that never even got the 250, that lost stuff in their fridge, that spent days cutting trees out of their yard – they just haven't got it.

What happened to that system? There's no appeal process if you're refused. Nobody really knows what the next steps are.

This government needs to put a plan together and put it together soon because we could have another one. They're talking nasty weather tonight and into tomorrow. I mean, high winds – I don't think it's going to be anything like the hurricane we had – but who knows what it could spiral into? These plans that they're coming out with, they just don't seem to be thinking them through.

I ask that this government look to the future, have a plan in case this happens again.

At this point, I'd like to adjourn debate so we can bring on another motion.

Speaker: Secunder.

Mr. Gallant: Seconded by the hon. member from O'Leary-Inverness.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

Mr. McNeilly: At this time, I'd like to call Motion 118.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, Motion 118 was under debate and debate was adjourned by the hon. member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

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

Mr. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise and talk to this motion again.

This was a motion, a very important motion, about bonuses, retention, recruitment almost, and how we're doing that on Prince Edward Island, and maybe some of our missteps.

This motion says to government, do better, because what we're hearing on this side of the Legislature is that you can't take something and give it to some and then not others when they work on a team. I don't understand it.

The worst dilemma I had, I was coaching my daughter's basketball team, volunteered to coach. She's in Grade 7, Grade 8. Wanted to coach just to get girls to play basketball. They're coming out to the team and they've never played before so that shouldn't restrict them from making the team.

You normally take 12 and schools at that age have 12 jerseys. But I wanted to take 15. I wanted to make it an experience for girls to just come out and play and be part of the team. Come to practice if you want. Just come out and have some fun, it doesn't matter. Let's just celebrate.

But when we came to play, when you take 15 people, you don't have enough jerseys come game time. So, what do you do? You want everybody to play. You're trying to do a good thing and now you don't have enough jerseys. You can't dress everybody. What are you supposed to do? At that time, it was very interesting. The girls figured it out along the way. The people that would normally play, our main players, they said we're going to give up our jerseys for everybody else.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) magic –

Mr. McNeilly: Yeah, so they said they're going to give up their jerseys so that

everybody can play and everybody can feel included. That's inclusion. That's how you build a team. They solved it and everybody had a great time. We did get some more jerseys and everybody – but everybody deserves a chance for an equal playing field.

That's just a little analogy about how this – what we've done here with these bonuses is not that. We have said here's some, because we're struggling as a province to look at a couple of different nurses, LPNs, and here's some. But we didn't think of the team as a whole. Everybody is deserving of that. Everybody has worked hard through COVID and they got us through but on the other end, we're into December. Everybody is feeling good and feeling joyous, except for the people that didn't feel part of the team.

I'm not sure how that came to be. Here we are, we have the 649 of announcements today. It was jackpot millions over here, both in the quantity and I wouldn't say necessarily, quality. There were some good announcements, there were some re-announcements. It was wild, wild west in here today.

Did we hear anything to acknowledge the mistakes of this government –

An Hon. Member: No.

Mr. McNeilly: – when it came time to giving and making this fair across the board for our health care workers, who work and maintain dignity and respect for people at every course of the way? Did we make them whole today?

We missed an opportunity, but we could announce whatever we wanted to. I just don't understand it. It was the perfect opportunity. I was fully expecting it. We have all these announcements. Mind you, the only thing that I knew was coming was, as, I think, the opposition – I wanted to recognize Diabetes Month. That was the biggest one. People struggle with diabetes in Prince Edward Island and you'd think that this government has done some – I think the announcement would have said that we have done some different things, along with insulin pumps –

Mr. MacKay: It's not an announcement. It's (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. McNeilly: Oh, okay. My bad.

Speaker: You'll have your chance, minister.

Mr. McNeilly: That's funny because I realize there was no announcement, minister. I did hear it in greetings, and it was a good announcement in greetings but was something that, as the minister of health – you would think that you'd want that in an announcement on a 6/49 day in here in the Legislature. You could have added that, no problem.

I mean, what's nine announcements or 10 announcements? It was there. That's something that we would have liked to have seen, but also, today would have been great to say, "Hey, you know what?" Stand up and say, "We're getting close to December. Our allied health professionals are very important. Here's how we're going to make this better." It just wasn't there today. It wasn't there.

I know you must be feeling the pressure, because I'm hearing it from all over the place, is that if you don't do something for them, this is going to become something that really hurts our system, as a whole. You're starting to see it, and minister, you're quite capable. You're quite capable and so is Health PEI; they're quite capable. So capable that – I'm looking at a piece of information that says that Health PEI is quite capable. I've got information here saying a time in lieu program from April 2021 to March 2022. March 2022; that wasn't that long ago.

It describes, the next line – there's a table there, and then the next line it says: this is a one-time benefit provided to excluded employees in recognition of work above and beyond normal duties related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It goes on to talk about how it's going to break down. One week, two weeks, three weeks. and four weeks of time off; or you could potentially cash that in, because of hard work. To excluded – do you know what that means? That means management. That

means that I'm looking at something that is quite capable of showing that you can – Health PEI can do things like this, and they did.

We talked about that. It took us until about question number five to the minister to say yes, this program did happen. Then he finally said yes, it happened.

What I don't understand is how can you, as the minister of health, justify – I don't know if you supported this. I don't know if anybody even told you that this was happening. This happened, but yet, our allied health professionals don't get anything. The respiratory therapists don't get anything.

We have a situation here where the team is broken. I started off talking about that team, way back when, that team of girls who wanted to feel included. Everybody felt included. That's the main thing. It seems like the main thing you want to do in government when you're there is make sure everybody feels included, because a team is only as good as its entirety. This has separated that team and caused a lot of damage.

Not that anybody says that the people who got it shouldn't have gotten it; it's the people that have worked tirelessly. The respiratory therapists – How can you not say that I value respiratory therapy, like other professions, when we have dealt with a trifecta of issues right now; how we have dealt with COVID, RSV, influenza.

Ms. Beaton: Lab technicians.

Mr. McNeilly: Lab technicians. Did you see the numbers out of the Health PEI Annual Report? Numbers are up. They're getting slammed down there. Thousands and thousands and thousands of tests lab technicians are doing, but no, we didn't value them and what they're doing. Well, I do.

I had the opportunity to speak to, way back when, speak to the great people who make the food in the hospitals. Unbelievable. We don't see them. The food just appears. Every single day, three meals a day, extra cookies, whatever you want; they do a great job of keeping people healthy when they're there.

That is a difficult job. I want to thank all the food preps, the people who prepare the food, because that is such a crucial job but gets very little recognition. Very little recognition. They work tirelessly. You don't see them, you just celebrate, eat their food – and that's some of the best moments when you're in the hospital, is when you get your food and you take the tray off, and there's something there that you like.

There's a bowl of hot chicken noodle soup, or they have the perfect amount of pepper packages, and whatever is going on. You're going to have a good meal in there when you're feeling at your lowest.

So, thank you. I don't understand why you're not feeling valued, but I want to say thank you.

Those are how we have to look at the system. I could go on and on. The porters in the hospital do such a great job. We value what you're doing.

I'm sure the minister's heard it every which way to Sunday about how he's got to do better with this. I don't know how. I don't know how you do something like this when you're heading into contracts with the same organizations. I can't imagine being a contract negotiator for government at this time. I don't know. I don't know what that's going to look like.

Here's the situation. We've got bonuses for some and not others, we've got a team that's fractured, and we've got to do better.

I went to the police awards two days ago. The minister of justice was there, and the official opposition leader was there. It was pretty incredible to see everybody dressed in uniform providing years and years of service to our great province, tirelessly.

The coolest thing about watching those awards when they went up to talk to the minister, was how they just anchored their last foot, you know? Just before they're about to stop, they stop and they bring their last foot up, with perfect posture, and they hit it on the ground.

When that foot hit the ground, you could tell how much pride they had in the work that they did. You could tell how valued they

treated their careers; how they have extended themselves to do whatever they can for the profession and the service of others.

Probably about 30 or 40 people got awards. Fifteen years, 25 years services; RCMP, police from all over the province. The pride at which – when they got together with their families afterwards and they took pictures, they held their award and they took pictures and it was a service award. "I was here for Prince Edward Island for this amount of time."

That's something I will never forget, and that is how we need to treat our health care workers. I know there are some out there. I know there are some awards and stuff that happen, but we need to understand what that feeling was like and how we missed the boat with this; how we absolutely missed the boat and that opportunity to make our system better. To make our system better across the board.

It would be neat to see. If you were to ask a nurse – if you were to ask an LPN, what would they say? Why did we come to these numbers? Could that \$8 million have been spread out? What would that have done?

Those awards that were passed out to the police and the service members, I'm sure they didn't cost very much, but they had a heck of a lot of impact. It's a day that I won't forget. It was great to see the families supporting the officers and how it affected the entire family.

By not doing that, which this motion talks about, we don't value the person, but we also don't value that family – family member. We've got work to do to make sure that we correct this somehow.

We do have a long way to go. I know, minister, you have been sitting over there patiently, and I know your heart's in the right spot. I'm going to probably say this now, because I don't think I'm going to give you any time to speak.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. McNeilly: So, I just wanted to –

Speaker: Wow.

An Hon. Member: Let me speak.

An Hon. Member: Déjà vu –

Mr. McNeilly: – to get in the flow of this –

Ms. Beaton: Maybe he'll do a minister statement.

Mr. McNeilly: Maybe a minister statement, for sure.

I know it's a hard job and I hope you can take the positives out of this, and try to figure out where we go, because there's no bigger questions that I hear than health care. I asked you mental health questions today. I mean, I think we got some of those – questions need to be asked. We talked about long-term care facilities. I don't think that our system is whole at the moment, and when this announcement first came out, it worried me.

It worries me, and it worries me for the great staff – I know you would understand the great staff that work for you and for Health PEI in our system.

What do we do next? How do we do next?

I want to know how I can help the minister to do that. You know, there's nothing we can do on this side, because you have to try to figure out a way to fix this. I'm not sure – I haven't heard anything. Maybe it's because I'm not giving you much time to talk about it.

Mr. Perry: You had five weeks. Five weeks.

Mr. McNeilly: That announcement could have been done today. That announcement could have been done today. Better communication around that announcement could've been done, and we've got to make sure that we figure out how we don't do this again.

The people that did not get the bonus, I don't think they're in the best of moods right now, and they – I don't know. The messages that I heard, they're such – they don't want to send them, minister. I can tell, they don't want to send those messages, but they don't understand how they can be excluded in

such a magnificent fashion by this government.

We do have work to do. We have an entire system that's on edge right now. People are not receiving the health care, necessarily, that they would like, I don't think. I heard about it today. I mean, it's just – every story I hear about health care is somebody trying to navigate access to the system in a different way that they struggle with.

It's causing a lot of anxiety for people to try to navigate that system. We can only – a lot of the times, people are just hoping they don't get sick right now. And a lot of times, people are suffering in silence. A good way to do it is make sure that we're there for them. What I'm hearing is once they do get access to that system, and once they get a chance to communicate with our great nurses and with our great – they don't really talk to the lab technicians too, too much – but they talk to our nurses and our LPNs. When they talk, and their magic touch that they have, they take the anxiety away from patients in the system.

We need to value them, which you have, but we need to value the other people. The people that make the system whole. The people that wrap their arms around it and say, you know what, I don't necessarily prescribe medication all the time. I don't – I'm not there on the frontlines, but I care, and I will do whatever I can to make people feel better while they're in here. That is our system, and it is good, minister, because of the people, the people that work.

Making strange hand gestures over there, I might just keep going. I think he's telling me to keep going.

Mr. Perry: [Laughter]

An Hon. Member: I'm giving you the time.

Mr. McNeilly: The time that I have. Oh, thanks a lot.

So, this is a very important motion, and the two clauses are there, and I'm so glad that I've had the chance to talk to this six or seven times, and I would talk to it six or seven more because it's important.

I think that the government knows it's important. I don't know how you're getting out of this one, but I tell you what – people are hurting, and I just want to take the opportunity to say thank you for all people in District 14 that work in the health care system and that are there for other people. Your jobs are incredibly important. Continue what you're doing and thank you for helping our system out in a time of need.

At this time, I would like to adjourn debate on this motion, seconded by the Leader of the Third Party.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Orders Other Than Government

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

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

I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the 38th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 38, *An Act to Amend the Election Act (No. 2)*, Bill No. 120, ordered for third reading.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With unanimous consent, I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, that the said bill be now read a third time.

Speaker: Hon. members, does he have unanimous consent for the bill to be read the third time?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Clerk: Bill No. 120, *An Act to Amend the Election Act (No. 2)*, read a third time.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, that the said bill do now pass.

Speaker: Hon. members, this is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do pass.

All those in favour, say “aye”.

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary, “nay”.

Bill is passed.

The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the 39th order of the day be now read.

Clerk: Order No. 39, *An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act*, Bill No. 126, ordered for third reading.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With unanimous consent, I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, that the said bill be now read a third time.

Speaker: Hon. members, does he have unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Clerk: Bill No. 126, *An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act*, read a third time.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, that the said bill do now pass.

Speaker: Hon. members, this is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do pass.

Al those in favour, say “aye”

Speaker: Contrary, “nay”.

Bill is passed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities, that the 32nd order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 32, *Loan Act 2022*, Bill No. 84, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Fisheries and Communities that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Loan Act 2022*, Bill No. 84, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (Perry): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *Loan Act 2022*.

A request has been made to bring a stranger on to the floor.

Shall it be granted? Granted.

Good afternoon, would you please state your name and position for Hansard?

Gordon MacFadyen: Gordon McFadyen, Executive Director, Fiscal Management.

Chair: Good afternoon, Gordon, and welcome.

Promoter, would you like to begin by giving just a brief statement on the bill’s intent?

Mr. McLane: *Loan Act 2022* would give government the authority to access additional long-term funding, if needed, to respond to unexpected events.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Hon. members, is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause, or open it up to general questions as a whole?

Some Hon. Members: General questions.

Chair: Okay. The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Gallant: Can you explain the difference? Is this loan act – is that so you can get special warrants? Does that give you the authority to do special warrants, or are they two different things? Two different avenues? How does that work?

Mr. McLane: The loan act is pursuant to Section 48 of the *Financial Administration Act*. It gives government the authority to borrow money on the longer term. So, in excess of 12 months. Separate apart from special warrants – special warrants is the authorization to have expenditures, or spending, in any given fiscal year,

authorized by the House through supplementary appropriation.

Mr. Gallant: Two different avenues, then.

Gordon MacFadyen: Correct.

Mr. Gallant: So, they don't need permission to get a special warrant, they just run it through the House here, when we do the budget. Is that correct?

Gordon MacFadyen: Again, the *Financial Administration Act* outlines the process for authorizing spending. The first is through the budgets; the operating and capital budget.

The second would be through special warrant, if the House is not in session and spending is required in excess of what the House has authorized. At the next sitting of the House, a summary of the special warrants is brought back to the House for consideration and vote. So, the House authorizes the special warrants as well.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Gallant: That's it for now, Chair. Thanks.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

I'm going to ask some questions, but I don't actually have a copy of the bill in front of me. I'm wondering if that would be –

Chair: Here.

Leader of the Opposition: Oh, thank you.

Firstly, a general question.

Chair: (Indistinct) sorry, I can't give you that one.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

We're talking about long-term loans here. And of course, anybody who holds a mortgage or anybody who has a loan currently outstanding, will know how much the interest rate has changed in the last little while.

Can you explain what impact the interest rate will have on – well, firstly on this piece of legislation? I assume it won't have any on the legislation.

Mr. Gallant: (Indistinct)

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Leader of the Third Party.

On the outstanding loans that we have – I guess that's the main question. We know that servicing the debt is the second or third biggest expense to government. So, how will those increased interest rates affect that?

Gordon MacFadyen: Over time, for sure, high interest rate environments would bring up government's cost of borrowing. Through long-term borrowing, we set individual amounts up for government to borrow and set to mature over a period of years, so that you're not putting your proverbial eggs all in one basket; so that if you don't have to get financing at the highest rates, we can wait it out or we can go when the markets are attractive.

Specifically, for government at this time, this piece of legislation would set up the ability to borrow. It's a three-step process. The House would authorize a loan act for the Province to borrow. The second step would be, we would go to Executive Council when the Minister of Finance deems it appropriate to actually go to the market and do the borrowing. The third piece, we report back to the Executive Council on the terms of the borrowing.

Both those second and third steps would be reported through an Order in Council, so, very public. Then, it would show up in the Public Accounts as a debenture issued on behalf of government.

We don't have any debentures coming due for refinancing this year. Maybe later, in '23, there's one coming due – 60 million with a large sinking fund on it. The next maturity is not until '25.

So, we're in a relatively good state right now, and keeping our interest costs kind of constant over the shorter term.

Leader of the Opposition: I really appreciate that explanation, Gordon. That

helped me enormously. Again, this is just because I'm not as familiar with this as I probably should be, I see that this loan act grants government the authority to borrow \$250 million.

How many years is – I guess the question is, this is *Loan Act 2022*; when was the last time that we had a loan act?

Gordon MacFadyen: We were here last year. We tried to set up a loan act each year that an operating budget is passed for what we see the potential long-term financing needs for the Province are. We can't do it without the authority of the House, so if we're not here ahead of the game and pre-planning, then we can't do it in borrowing, we'd have to only do short-term borrowing. This is really to set up requirements as life may unfold.

In the operating budget, there would be a schedule at the back – I think, Schedule 2 – that would lay out the expected cash requirements for government, but the Public Accounts are very much an accrual set of statements. So, payables and receivables in there that don't draw cash, amortization doesn't draw cash; but paying back loans, buying infrastructure, paying the bills of government, requires cash.

So, we would detail what our expectations for the draw on cash is, and there's a number at the bottom that we would say, that's what we think our long-term borrowing needs may be for that particular year.

Leader of the Opposition: I presume you give yourself decent wiggle room in that as well, Gordon. What you just mentioned, 60 million coming up with a sinking fund and there's another one due 2025 – that's a long way from 250 million. Is it typical to have a loan act which allows that sort of cushion?

Gordon MacFadyen: Absolutely. Again, currently, there is *Loan Act 2021* out for 200 million that this House authorized last year, of which we're looking right now as to when we may borrow and when we're required to borrow. So, when the time is right and the market would be receptive of, kind of, buying our debt, we would be going out to open up that *Loan Act 2021*. So, this is definitely future planning.

Leader of the Opposition: So, the \$250 million that we're presumably about to authorize in the room right now, the – how can I put this question?

What's considered short-term loan? You've used both phrases, and I'm just wondering what the timeframe on them is.

Gordon MacFadyen: Short-term loan would be any borrowing up to 12 months. We run a short-term borrowing program of about 780 million to fund the short-term needs of government as cash flow is not the way you want it. We don't get all the cheques in up front before the bills need to be paid.

So, we run about a \$780 million short-term borrowing program, and at any time, we could term some of that out as well, if the market conditions are right. Currently, short-term rates are lower than long-term rates, so we're getting a better interest expense on the shorter term.

Leader of the Opposition: So, the 250 million or up to, is that including refinancing of existing debt and also financing of any new debt that may appear in the next budget year?

Gordon MacFadyen: Yeah. This would be to support any refinancing of loans that will come due in the future and, as well, if government runs a deficit, we would have to finance that. The capital program needs to be financed as well; the capital program in excess of the amortization that's on the operating side, so there's a net on that as well. So, there are many uses of cash for which we need to have funds around.

Leader of the Opposition: One final question.

Gordon, can you give the House some indication of what our total borrowing is, at the moment, and the interest costs on that? I realize that's a big question.

Gordon MacFadyen: We're about 2.25 billion with a sinking fund against about 400 million of that, I believe. We run a short-term program of 780 million, of which we would have some investments against that of about 500 million. So net, 780 less 500 and – I think we're 2.2 net. So, might be even a

little bit more than that 2.4 less the sinking fund.

Leader of the Opposition: Maybe I didn't include it in my question, Gordon, but the financing costs associated with that 2.2 billion?

Gordon MacFadyen: We would have a budget of around 130 million currently for that. It was a little bit lower in the previous fiscal year with the low interest rates. We're creeping back up towards that number again, for sure.

Leader of the Opposition: Sorry, Chair, I keep coming back with a last, last question. Debt to GDP is a ratio that markets look at and you just talked about. Can you give us an idea as to where we are in terms of the graph of debt to GDP on Prince Edward Island?

Gordon MacFadyen: The Public Accounts disclosed our last number. I don't have it right on top of mind, but it was below 30; 26-something, 26.4, 26.7. That would be the last publicly available number for net debt to GDP.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm good.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: You're welcome.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Gallant: Thanks, Chair.

In Section 2(b), is this new or has this been there for a long time? How many loans do you have that are 40 years or a little less?

Gordon MacFadyen: No, that would be a pretty standard clause. We generally don't go past 30 these days for any amortization periods. I think you find when you start pushing out debt that long, the interest bite becomes a little too large for the amount of money that you would be looking for. We've done 10-year deals; we've done 30-year deals in my time here with government.

Mr. Howard: So, then, why it would be not to exceed 40? Why wouldn't it be not to exceed 30?

Gordon MacFadyen: There are some provinces that have gone with the ultra-long maturity bonds, for sure. There are times in the market where that maturity period has an attractive interest rate. Right now, it's very compressed at that 10-, 20-, 30-year, 40-year run, so most of the markets would measure and have benchmarks for 30-year bonds but from time to time, it would give us flexibility, if the offer and the deal was right, to term it out a little bit farther.

Mr. Gallant: Is this something like – you had indicated it was 200 million last year for the loans act. Now it's 250 million, could be 300 million next year. Would that change, that 40 years, or is that just going to be a constant figure there?

Gordon MacFadyen: That's pretty well a constant for us, is the top end of the term sheet that we would be looking towards.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Chair. That's it.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: Excuse me if I don't understand it right, but if you have a balanced budget, operating budget, as you have right now, does that mean the overall debt burden more or less stays the same, aside from little variations in the churn of loans and all that kind of stuff? Or does it build up in another budget like the amortization of the Capital Budget? I'm not quite sure how that fits into the total debt.

Gordon MacFadyen: Yeah, for sure. If government runs a surplus, it takes some pressure off the short-term borrowing. What we saw over the past year, in our short-term program, it remained constant. We were able to put some more money into what we call our liquidity reserve, our reserve of investments that we actually make a little money on. We saw that number hold and actually increase a little bit. The first run on the surplus would be kind of the lesser interest expense on the short-term program.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: I'm good.

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Mr. McLane: I move the title.

Chair: *Loan Act 2022.*

Shall it carry. Carried.

Mr. McLane: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. McLane: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *Loan Act 2022*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities, that the 31st order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 31, *Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2023*. Bill No. 88, order for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Fisheries and Communities, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 88, *Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2023*, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Fisheries and Communities, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the grant of capital supply to His Majesty.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road to chair the Committee of the Whole House, please.

Chair (Perry): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2023*.

A request has been made to bring a stranger onto the floor.

Shall it be granted? Granted.

Would you please state your name and position for Hansard?

Gordon MacFadyen: Gordon MacFadyen, Executive Director, Fiscal Management.

Chair: Thank you, and welcome back.

Hon. members, is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill now be open just to general questions?

Okay.

Shall the bill carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Chair: Shall the schedule carry?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Chair: I have to read the enacting clause.

May it please your honour –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Chair: Sorry, okay. Yeah.

Gordon MacFadyen: I'm done? Perfect.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. McLane: I move the title.

Chair: *Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2023.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. McLane: I move the enacting clause.

Chair: We, His Majesty's dutiful and loyal and servants of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island, towards appropriating the several supplies raised for the exigencies of The Majesty's Government and for the other purposes herein after mentioned, do humbly beseech that it be enacted.

Mr. McLane: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Chair: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2023*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Some Hon. Members: Standing vote.

Speaker: Hon. members, it was a standing vote.

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

[The bells were rung]

Ms. Altass: The opposition is ready for the vote.

Mr. Henderson: Third party is ready for the vote, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bell: Government is ready for the vote, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: All those voting against the report of the committee, please stand.

Clerk: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, the hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, and the hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Speaker: All those voting for the report of the committee, please stand.

Clerk: The hon. Minister of Finance, the hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities, the hon. Member from Morell-Donagh, the hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety, the hon. Premier, the hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action, the hon. Member from Stratford-Keppoch, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Winsloe, the hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, the hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning, the hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture, the hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, the hon. Leader of the Third Party, and the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Hon. members, ministers, passed.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that the 30th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 30, *Supplementary Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2022*, Bill No. 89, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Premier, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Supplementary Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2022*, Bill No. 89, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (Perry): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *Supplementary Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2022*.

A request has been made to bring a stranger onto the floor.

Shall it be granted? Granted.

Good afternoon. Would you please state your name and position for Hansard?

Gordon MacFadyen: Gordon MacFadyen, executive director, Fiscal Management.

Chair: Thank you, and welcome.

Hon. members, I'm going to open up the floor now to the bill for any questions.

Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Shall Schedule "A" carry? Carried.

Shall Schedule "B" carry? Carried.

Mr. McLane: I move the title.

Chair: *Supplementary Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2022*.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. McLane: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. McLane: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *Supplementary Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2022*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities, that the 8th, 9th, 10th, 12th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 20th, 21st, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st and 32nd orders of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Ms. Beaton: You can't call 30, 31 and 32 on third reading.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct) unanimous consent, which is what (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: No.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I seek unanimous consent for Bills 31, 32 – and 30, is it? Yeah, 30, 31, and 32.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety, you do not have unanimous consent.

Ms. Beaton: Speaker, (Indistinct) question?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities, that the 8th, 9th, 10th, 12th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 20th, 21st, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th and 29th orders of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Ms. Beaton: Question?

Speaker: Yes, hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford?

Ms. Beaton: Was the 11th order of the day on the list, and has that already passed third reading?

Ms. Compton: I didn't say the 11th.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Okay, I'll try this again.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities, that the 8th, 9th, 10th, 12th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 20th, 21st, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th and 29th orders of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

[The following bills were ordered for third reading]

Clerk: Order No. 8, *An Act to Amend the Public Sector Pension Plan Act*, Bill No. 53;

Order No. 9, *An Act to Amend the Grain Elevators Act*, Bill No. 45;

Order No. 10, *An Act to Amend the Education Act (No. 2)*, Bill No. 57;

Order No. 12, *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act (No. 2)*, Bill No. 68;

Order No. 16, *Land Survey Act*, Bill No. 82;

Order No. 17, *An Act to Amend the Early Learning and Child Care Act*, Bill No. 76;

Order No. 18, *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act*, Bill No. 73;

Order No. 20, *Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2)*, Bill No. 75;

Order No. 21, *Notaries and Commissioners Act*, Bill No. 72;

Order No. 25, *An Act to Amend the Registry Act*, Bill No. 77;

Order No. 26, *Gasoline Tax Act*, Bill No. 81;

Order No. 27, *An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act (No. 4)*, Bill No. 85;

Order No. 28, *An Act to Amend the Plant Health Act*, Bill No. 86;

Order No. 29, *Residential Tenancy Act*, Bill No. 87.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Fisheries and Communities, that the said bills be now read a third time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

[The following bills were read a third time]

Clerk: Bill No. 53, *An Act to Amend the Public Sector Pension Plan Act*;

Bill No. 45, *An Act to Amend the Grain Elevators Act*;

Bill No. 57, *An Act to Amend the Education Act (No. 2)*;

Bill No. 68, *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act (No. 2)*;

Bill No. 82, *Land Survey Act*;

Bill No. 76, *An Act to Amend the Early Learning and Child Care Act*;

Bill No. 73, *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act*;

Bill No. 75, *Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2)*;

Bill No. 72, *Notaries and Commissioners Act*;

Bill No. 77, *An Act to Amend the Registry Act*;

Bill No. 81, *Gasoline Tax Act*;

Bill No. 85, *An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act (No. 4)*;

Bill No. 86, *An Act to Amend the Plant Health Act*;

Bill No. 87, *Residential Tenancy Act*.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Fisheries and Communities, that the said bills do now pass.

Speaker: Hon. members, these bills are introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to with or without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bills do pass.

All those in favour, say “Aye”.

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary, “nay”.

Bills carried.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the 11th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 11, *An Act to Amend the Rental of Residential Property Act (No. 2)*, Bill No. 80, ordered for third reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that the said bill be now read a third time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 80, *An Act to Amend the Rental of Residential Property Act (No. 2)*, read a third time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that the said bill do now pass.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. members, this is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to with amendment, read a third time, and it is now moved that the bill do pass.

All those in favour, say “aye”.

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary, “nay”.

Bill passed.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the 19th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 19, *An Act to Amend the Plastic Bag Reduction Act*, Bill No. 79, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 79, *An Act to Amend the Plastic Bag Reduction Act*, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road to chair the Committee of the Whole House, please.

Chair (Perry): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Plastic Bag Reduction Act*.

A request has been made to bring a stranger onto the floor.

Shall it be granted? Granted.

Would you please state your name and position for Hansard?

Barry Jackson: Barry Jackson, Manager of Product Stewardship and Regulatory Affairs.

Chair: Thank you very much, Barry, and welcome.

Hon. members, is it the wish of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause or open up to general questions as a whole?

Mr. Trivers: Clause by clause.

Some Hon. Members: General questions.

Chair: Okay. Leader – or, sorry. General questions, are we open for?

Mr. Trivers: I’d like clause by clause.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. Myers: It’s this long.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Premier King: That’s right. It shouldn’t take too long then.

Mr. Myers: It’s about 30 words.

Chair: Well, you know what, we're going to read it clause by clause.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: What?

Chair: Yeah, the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald has requested it, so I'm going to ahead and read it because of his request.

Mr. Myers: Do you want me to (Indistinct)

Chair: So, clause 1.

Mr. Myers: Did you want me to talk about what (Indistinct)

Chair: Oh, sorry. Yes, before we go, promoter, would you please give just a brief statement on the bill's intent?

Mr. Myers: Yeah. I think we feel, through the department's work, that the switch to reduce plastic bag use has gone really well, and I think that Islanders have adopted it at a very high rate. We're making changes here now to stop charging people, when they don't have a bag, the 15 cents to get a paper bag.

I see it as a good change, and Barry can talk about it more, but our program, I believe, is working quite well.

Chair: Okay.

1. Clause 1(f) of the *Plastic Bag Reduction Act* R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. P-9.2, is repealed.

Any questions?

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thanks, Chair.

So, the *Plastic Bag Reduction Act*, I mean, I had the privilege of bringing it in when I was the minister of environment, water and climate change, but it was actually the swan song of Al Roach; brought in as a private member's bill back in his dying days as a Liberal member.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. Myers: Dying days indeed.

Mr. Trivers: Kind of like we're in the dying days of the legislative sitting right now.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: I know one of the criticisms was, after the fact – I think it was a great act, it did the right thing – was that we needed to expand to other types of things other than just plastic bags. We need to eliminate plastic as a whole.

I was wondering how you're coming along with legislation or regulations to ban plastics as a whole.

Chair: I'm just going to ask, promoter, does that question pertain to this clause?

Barry Jackson: No, it doesn't.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Chair: Okay, so hon. member, do you have a question regarding this clause?

Mr. Trivers: Well, Chair, we're repealing the *Plastic Bag Reduction Act*, and this is an act that –

Mr. Myers: Just clause – not the whole act.

Mr. Trivers: Clause 1(f).

Mr. Myers: Just clause 1(f), yeah.

Chair: You asked for it to be read clause by clause. I read it clause –

Mr. Trivers: So –

Chair: I'm sorry, I have the floor.

I'm reading it clause by clause, so right now, we are on clause 1(f).

Do you have question?

Mr. Trivers: Yes.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. Trivers: I wanted to know what progress is being made – which is related to removing the dollar off and by repealing clause 1(f), because we need to reduce all of our plastic, not just plastic bags. I was just

looking for an update, you know, from the minister and/or the stranger.

I don't know, I think it is relevant, Chair.

Barry Jackson: Yeah, the momentum that we had in regard to when the act first came in was certainly stifled by the pandemic and a heavy reliance on plastics and all packaging for checkout, grocery, and for other retail and quick service.

But not stifled by the pandemic was the work that the federal government was doing with their ban. So, the federal government is implementing, as you know, bans in place. Basically, all other provinces are matching up with the federal ban on things like flexible straws and single-use ring carriers for a six-pack of beer and stuff like that.

It's a time that you sort of see what the feds are doing. And now, they've actually outlined their timelines for when those bans are going to be in place. There's really no need for additional – a PEI-specific ban on plastic straws, for example, because the federal approach is going to cover that.

Mr. Trivers: So, did you consider repealing the entire act?

Barry Jackson: No, and any province that has a bag ban in effect, the feds realize that there's many of them out there. Even since we've implemented ours, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland have implemented one. So, there's a harmonization with the two of them. It does still have a purpose. There's no need at this time to repeal it, the entire act.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: That's it for this clause. Thanks, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: I have a question about the paper bags. They have a significant impact on the environment also. So, I'm not quite sure I understand whether this affects – will encourage the free use of paper bags? What exactly are you looking for here?

Barry Jackson: We don't think so. We've had years since the act has been in force, or in place, rather. There hasn't been a huge consumer desire to go back to pure paper bags. From what we've heard from retailers, from what we've seen with our own interactions with businesses, is that customers are either preferring a reusable bag, bringing in their own bag, or going no bag at all.

There isn't an expected desire to, suddenly now that paper bags are going to be free, that there's going to be a big switch over to paper.

The other thing that I should note is that this was requested to relieve the fees on paper bags in the early stages of the pandemic. I think we've – the deputy minister and I, I think, talked to committee here one time before about the fact that businesses, grocery retailers in particular, were charging for convenience fees for using their online ordering. So, they had a fee for that. They didn't want to then tack on a bag fee when the customer didn't have a choice but to get their groceries in paper.

We haven't had fees on paper now for a few years during the pandemic, and we've not seen an increase in the use of paper at that time, from any retailer.

Mr. Hammarlund: Oh, I didn't actually realize they were free. I usually decline a paper bag –

Barry Jackson: As most Islanders –

Mr. Hammarlund: – because I think it's going to cost me money, honestly.

I also know that we had the recent case where our pulp mill locally – so paper pollutes just as much as plastic. So, I'm not really supporting taking the fee away on the paper bag. I don't quite know why that is necessary. It's like paper is good and plastic is bad; that's not true. They're both bad.

Barry Jackson: Yeah. No, certainly, we're seeing more people choosing either reusable or no bag at all.

Mr. Myers: It's money, money, money.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: That's all.

Chair: Shall this clause carry? Carried.

2. (1) Clause 4(2)(c) of the Act is repealed and the following substituted: (c) the customer is charged a fee of not less than \$1 for a reusable bag.

Questions?

Shall this clause carry? Carried.

2. (2) Clause 4(3)(b) of the Act is amended by the addition of the words “, other than a paper bag,” after the words “provide a checkout bag”.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: So, referring back to the original act that's being amended here, this is the prohibition clause that's being amended?

Barry Jackson: This is the clause regarding the requirement for a retailer to charge for a paper bag.

Mr. Trivers: Yes, 4(3) –

So, right now, it's clause 3(b) in the original act: For greater certainty, no business shall, and (b) is provide a checkout bag, and now you're going to say, other than a paper bag to a customer free of charge. Is that correct?

Barry Jackson: It's a restructuring of that clause. So, it's just to eliminate that you're only – you cannot provide a bag other than a paper bag free of charge. So, there is still a charge. There is still going to be a charge on your reusable bags.

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, that's my question. So, how come we're not letting retailers provide a reusable bag free of charge?

Barry Jackson: There's a really good reason for that, because our neighbouring province, in Nova Scotia, has seen an uptake of a very low-quality reusable bag.

Mr. Trivers: Oh.

Barry Jackson: So, when the reusable bag is of a poor quality, it may have a 10-cent fee attached to it, it becomes the next waste problem of plastic bags. So, we did not go the way that Nova Scotia did, and we are keeping at least a minimum fee on the reusable bags, and to date, that's actually been a benefit because we haven't see this jump of very thin, poor quality, potentially reusable bags that are just ending up in the waste stream because they're basically a one-use bag.

Mr. Trivers: Oh, no, that's great, and great work to fix that potential loophole in the legislation.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

3. (1) Clause 5(1)(a) of the Act is repealed.

Shall this clause carry? Carried.

Ms. Bell: Carry the bill.

Chair: 3(2) Subclause 5(1)(b)(iii) of the Act is amended by the deletion of the word “fish” and the substitution of the word “seafood”.

Shall this clause carry? Carried.

Shall this bill carry? Carried.

Mr. Myers: There you go. Who would've thought this was going to happen today? It's your lucky day.

Barry Jackson: I wouldn't.

Mr. Myers: You're lucky, by bad political decisions upstairs, you got on the floor.

I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Plastic Bag Reduction Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Myers: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Myers: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, with unanimous consent, that the 30th, 31st and 32nd orders of the day be now read.

Speaker: What's the last one?

Ms. Compton: Thirtieth, 31st and 32nd.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: No.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety, you do not have unanimous consent.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: Worth a try.

Government Motions

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call Motion 57 to the floor.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Ms. Beaton: Go to zero emissions. That would (Indistinct)

Some Hon Members: (Indistinct)

Deputy Clerk: Motion 57.

The Minister of Fisheries and Communities moves, seconded by the Minister of Social Development and Housing, the following motion:

WHEREAS The seafood industry has an economic contribution of \$938 million to the Island's economy;

AND WHEREAS PEI has a long rich history of commercial fishery, aquaculture, and processing sectors, providing great quality products to Islanders and across the globe;

AND WHEREAS We position ourselves as Canada's food island, as a premium destination brand in food tourism and promote our key food sectors which include lobster, oysters, mussels, and fish.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly encourage all Islanders to support local seafood industry, contributing to the local economy and creating prosperous PEI communities.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities to start debate, please.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The fishery and the aquaculture industry in PEI are more than phenomenal. They're awesome. We provide the best seafood around the world. If we're on the right trend right now, our seafood industry is going to hit over \$1.2 billion going forward and we're actually looking at extending that market into foreign markets.

We've had conversations lately, in the last little bit, with the governments of Turkey, the governments of Vietnam, the governments of Israel, the governments of Japan, United Kingdom, Norway and also Iceland, on bringing more seafood out into the marketplace; but we're also missing a golden opportunity, domestically.

That's one thing I've been focusing on in the last little bit, is trying to improve our domestic market and selling features of our seafood across this country. That's

something we all can work on. We all can support local. We can all support our seafood industry and make sure that we are putting the finest seafood in the world – which we are – out in the marketplace.

When the hon. member up there in Tignish-Palmer Road – we have the greatest lobster being processed up in that area.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fox: They're also being processed down in Beach Point.

We have mussels from the area of the minister of housing and social development, and also the Member from Morell-Donagh; down in that area. We have oysters from tip to tip that we can go to and try this seafood. I'll you, you just can't beat going and grabbing a box of oysters and taking it home.

Get out your pens and papers and write this recipe down. This is my favourite recipe and I really enjoy doing it.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. Fox: You need to go buy a box of oysters. Go to your local grocery store –

Speaker: What kind?

Mr. Fox: Any kind. Cascumpec or Raspberry Point, any of them; Brackley Bay (Indistinct) –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: – Village (Indistinct); there are all kinds of them.

You need to go to your local store, and you need to buy some good shredded cheese. Buy some nice onions.

Mr. McNeilly: ADL.

Mr. Fox: Buy some nice onions. Yes, ADL products.

After you get your onions and your shredded cheese, go find some fresh parsley.

An Hon. Member: Whoa.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: You need that natural, farm-raised bacon from PEI.

Fry that bacon up until it's nice, golden brown, and then cut it up into fine pieces. Take about a quarter cup of that bacon – now don't forget the bacon grease. Keep that bacon grease on the side.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: I'm telling you. I want you take that onion that you get from your local store, and I want you to cut it up very fine – a quarter of a cup. Take a quarter cup of parsley also. You need about a half a cup of shredded cheese from that ADL factory down the road, and you mix this all together.

An Hon. Member: This is embarrassing.

Mr. Fox: So, you've got a concoction. Now, the final ingredient in this concoction is some good breadcrumbs. Take a good couple of pieces of homemade bread and put it in your toaster oven and bring it to a toast. Take it out of the toaster oven and cut the – what do you call it?

An Hon. Member: Crust.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: – crust off it, cut the crust off it.

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct) croutons.

Mr. Fox: You need about – no, you don't want to use croutons.

Mr. Henderson: No croutons?

Mr. Fox: No croutons. You take that piece of bread, two pieces of bread, and you chop it up nice and fine, and you make yourself about a cup of breadcrumbs.

I want you to take a nice glass bowl, and I want you to take that cup of breadcrumbs and put it in the bowl. Add your quarter cup of onions, add your quarter cup of parsley, add your shredded cheese, and add your onions, and mix it all together.

Remember I told you a minute ago about that bacon grease?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: You need to take about a quarter cup of that bacon grease and mix it all in with all your different ingredients. You mix it and you stir it together, and you make a breading. Now, when you get that all mixed together, just take that and put that aside.

Mr. Trivers: Can you do it gluten free, though? That's the question.

Mr. Fox: Not going to worry about the gluten-free stuff. I'm sorry, but I'm not a gluten-free person. In my kitchen, I'm not gluten free. I have to say it. I respect the gluten free, but we're talking my recipe here.

Take those nice oysters, and I want you to take a nice flat pan, and I want you to fill it full of baking beans. Two or three bags of baked beans and put them in that tray.

Now we're going to get out our old shucking knife and we're going to get out a nice piece of towel. We're going to put that on a glass thing so we can shuck these oysters safely. Take those oysters and start shucking them.

An Hon. Member: What's the glass thing for?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: Take that oyster that you've shucked – a good 25 is a good number in that pan. You take them and you set them on top of the beans. What this does, it keeps the juice of the oyster in the oyster, so it doesn't go and spill in the pan, right? Use your baked beans.

So, you've got your baked beans and you've got your oysters. Now, I want you to take a nice teaspoon of your concoction; of all those ingredients you've got in your glass pan, and I want you to take a teaspoon of that and put it on every oyster.

Some Hon. Members: Oh.

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct) your toaster oven's got to be turned on. Turn your toaster oven up there to 425, set the timer for about 20 minutes, and let it get heated up to temperature.

Doing things like this supports our local fishers and aquaculture.

Now, when you get those oysters and you get that little teaspoon of stuff on top of each oyster, I want you to take that tray and I want you to put it in the oven for 15 minutes.

An Hon. Member: Put tin foil over it?

Mr. Fox: Don't have to put tin foil over it, no. No, you want it to cook naturally and let the juices come up through all the ingredients, and all that there stuffing that you put on top.

An Hon. Member: Okay.

Mr. Fox: After about seven minutes, I want you to take that pan out, and I want you to reverse it. I want you to take the pan out and reverse it around. Put the front to the back and the back to the front. Switch it around. Your oven doesn't cook evenly. I have to tell you. You've got to do this.

After you get that all in there, you'll sit back and relax. Spend some time with the family. Talk about the local fisherman across Prince Edward Island. Talk about the aquaculture industry. Take some pictures. Take some pictures and put it on TikTok or Instagram or Facebook and show the world how we at home can take our natural ingredients of the lobster industry or the fishing industry – the aquaculture industry – and we can make these fine dishes at home.

Fifteen minutes has gone –

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Speaker: Hon. minister, the hour has been called.

An Hon. Member: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Well, I'm going to the Claddagh Room.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Winsloe.

Mr. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Stratford-Keppoch, that this House adjourn until Thursday, December 1st, in the p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The House adjourned until Thursday, December 1st, at 1:00 p.m.