



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
of Prince Edward Island**

**Official Report of  
Debates and Proceedings**

**(Hansard)**

**Third Session of the 67th General Assembly**

**Wednesday, 8 April 2026**

**No. 7**

**The Honourable Brad Trivers, Speaker**

Published by Order of the Legislature

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

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

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

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

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

[Hon. B. Trivers in the chair]

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of Guests

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

Welcome back to another day in the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island.

[1:05 p.m.]

Hello to everyone in the gallery; thanks for attending with us here today. Welcome to those watching online.

This evening Skills Canada Prince Edward Island, Holland College, and the Government of Canada are hosting the Skills Excellence Awards. This event brings together students, educators, industry partners, and community leaders for a celebration of outstanding achievements in skilled trades and technology. Each year, over 300 Island students compete in 38 categories of trades and technologies. I want to wish all a wonderful evening of celebration as you look back on the achievements of this year.

This weekend, the Western Rebels will host the Maritime U16 Hockey Championship. Tyne Valley is going to be the place to be this weekend. I want to wish everyone competing the best of luck. If you're free this weekend, I encourage you to make the drive to Tyne Valley and watch some top-tier hockey.

Also, this Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., the Pinch Penny Fair will be taking place at the Confederation Centre of the Arts. This giant indoor yard sale is a thrift shopper's dream with hundreds of items for sale including books, sporting goods, toys, plants, music, jewellery, tools, glassware, and more.

For over 50 years now, this event has raised funds to support art education programs at the centre. I have fond memories – some of my earliest memories, in fact, are of the Pinch Penny Fair. I remember being a young child and being at the fair, actually worked at the fair blowing up helium balloons and selling the helium balloons. I specifically remember the Pinch Penny Fair being the only opportunity every year where you could get helium balloons.

It was very exciting for me as a kid. The Pinch Penny Fair will be always linked with helium balloons for me.

I want to acknowledge an Islander who was selected by NASA to be part of a team of five engineering students from UNB to track Artemis II. Megan MacDonald from Malpeque, PEI, was selected as part of this special team. I want to congratulate Megan on this incredible opportunity and experience.

That's all for me today. I wish everyone a good day here in the Legislature. All the best to you all.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's a pleasure to rise and welcome all those who are watching online, especially those watching from Tignish-Palmer Road. Welcome to all those in the gallery today. I see Dean MacArthur is back again; welcome to the gallery.

Big shout-out – a happy birthday, and it's a 95<sup>th</sup> happy birthday to Austin Bowman. Everybody who knows Austin knows he has a keen political interest. I'm sure he's watching the Legislature today; happy birthday, Austin. Also, happy birthday wishes out to Judy Hughes. Judy and Austin, actually, would be really good friends, so it's nice that they're celebrating their birthdays today.

Back again this year, Bridget and Harriet will be at the Tignish Parish Centre this Sunday evening at 7 p.m. Anyone who follows them up west knows that they are quite a comedy duo, but they do have an extended cast and, over the past few years, have put on a great show at the parish centre. Proceeds go to a local organization of their choice. If you have nothing to do on Sunday evening, drop by the parish centre in Tignish and take in the cast and crew as they put on a really good performance. You'll probably have one of the best emcees in West Prince there doing it.

As the Premier mentioned, the skills competition – that's something that I have judged multiple times in the past. It's really nice to see our youth right across the Island participate in the skills, whether it's cosmetology to woodworking and anywhere in between, and to showcase the skills that they have learned. Many congratulations to

all those who have competed, congratulations to all the award winners, and a big thank you to all the organizers, volunteers, and instructors who helped get these students to where they are.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will end my remarks for today and wish everyone a great day here in the Legislature.

Thank you.

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

**M. MacFarlane:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome back to everyone in the Legislature: members, and everyone joining us in the gallery – thanks for coming out to observe the proceedings today – and everyone watching online at home.

[1:10 p.m.]

A couple of events I wish to point out this afternoon:

April 14<sup>th</sup> in Charlottetown and April 21<sup>st</sup> in Summerside are the job fairs hosted by SkillsPEI – at the Delta in Charlottetown, at the Credit Union Place in Summerside. Just advance notice to that. Job-seekers are encouraged to come prepared with copies of their resume and ready to talk to employers about employment opportunities. I know those are well taken up, those job fairs hosted by SkillsPEI.

I had mentioned previously in my greetings about some watershed group work. An update that the Wright's Creek Watershed group is joining the Charlottetown Area Watershed Association – both groups, moving forward, will operate as one under the Charlottetown Area Watershed Association to share knowledge, experience, resources, and community efforts to better protect and improve local waterways. Congratulations to those groups, to that joining up of those groups.

Finally, on Saturday at the Linkletter Community Hall this weekend coming up, the PEI Woodlot Owners Association will hold its 15<sup>th</sup> annual general meeting. Registration at nine, meeting starts at 9:30. I note that the Generation XX pancake breakfast starts at nine, so if you're fast with your pancakes at nine, you can get from Generation XX to the Linkletter Community Hall, which is what I intend to do.

The AGM for the Woodlot Owners Association brings together the woodlot owners, forestry professionals, and community members interested in forests of Prince Edward Island. It's a great organization. As a woodlot owner myself, I've been a member for some time and appreciate the work that they do and the information that they give out to members.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I wish everyone a great day of debate here in the Legislature.

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

**K. Bernard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome back to colleagues, staff, and everybody tuning in from Charlottetown Victoria-Park and around the Island; our Pages today, Jorja, Jada, and Zachary. I'm not sure; it seems like Jorja is never in school. She's always in here serving us every day. Thank you for being here with us today, and everybody joining us in the gallery, thanks for being here.

I just wanted to quickly mention that Fusion is celebrating Earth Week again this year. It's their sixth year, and they're looking for volunteers.

Monday, April 20<sup>th</sup> is a Buds n' Suds event where you can learn how to pot a vegetable and an herb plant, go home with them, and get advice on growing food from local, high-intensity urban farmers. This is at the Dali Café location.

Wednesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> is Fusion Flavours, where a newcomer chef will demonstrate how to cook a dish from their culture, and you get to enjoy that food. There's a presentation on sustainable food production.

The week wraps up Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, with a Confederation Trail cleanup from one to four. That's their annual cleanup event. There are three locations to choose from. I highly encourage anyone who's available that day to take part in the cleanup, sign up to volunteer, and join the events. I would just like to thank Fusion Charlottetown for their tireless and excellent work.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-Pownal.

**B. Curran:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise today. I want to recognize everybody watching online, especially those watching from District 2 Georgetown-Pownal. I want to recognize everybody in our gallery, especially Kim Porter and a longtime friend of mine, Darlene Ching.

I also want to recognize Trevor and Amy MacDonald from Orwell Cove. Trevor and Amy have been longtime friends of mine. I'll tell you one thing: Trevor MacDonald will probably deliver you the best load of firewood you could probably ever ask for. If anyone is out there looking for a load of firewood, you can light it with a match.

Thank you very much.

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

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

It's a pleasure to rise today. I welcome everybody here in the gallery; it's lovely to see you. Welcome all those from District 22 in Summerside.

I just wanted to rise today to say a happy birthday to my grandson, Jaseley Gallant. Jaseley is in grade 6 at Queen Elizabeth Elementary School in Kensington. Happy birthday, Jase. I hope you have a great day. Nana loves you.

Thank you.

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

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

As always, it's a pleasure to rise here in the Legislature every day that we have the privilege and the honour to be sitting in these seats. I do want to welcome all the visitors here in the gallery. It's always great to see a great crew sitting in the gallery and watching the proceedings. Certainly, as well, I want to give a shout-out and say hello to all those who are watching in online, certainly the ones from beautiful District 26 Alberton-Bloomfield.

[1:15 p.m.]

Talking about beautiful District 26, last evening when I got west, I decided I'd take a run down to what is the most picturesque and beautiful harbour in PEI – Northport. It was great to see. The number of vessels/fishing boats that are already in the water, seeing the traps that are being piled up on the wharf, just gives that real sense that, yes, spring is here. Looking forward to April 25<sup>th</sup>, setting day in LFA 24, given that the weather will cooperate, which we will anticipate that it does. Looking very much forward to that first feed of fresh Island lobster.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Hon. B. Thompson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity.

I'd like to say hi to everyone in beautiful District 8. We have some pretty nice harbours in District 8, as well, in the national park, too. Welcome all the guests, too. I heard Trevor MacDonald; I had to look, make sure it wasn't the bird man from Murray Harbour, but it's the other Trevor MacDonald. It's good to see you.

Mr. Speaker, you know that the Masters is this weekend. I was watching a program about the Masters and Mike Weir. After you win the Masters, the next year you host the dinner of all the previous winners, and you choose the menu. He was reviewing his menu from 2004. He brought salmon from B.C., he brought bison from Manitoba, and he said, "I brought Prince Edward Island potatoes." He said that was the highlight of the meal.

Best of luck to all the golfers out there. We look forward to a great Augusta this year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Hon. Z. Bell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm assuming that you may bring some greetings on this as well, but I did want to say that there was a very strong contingent, especially from this House, last night in the beautiful district of District 16 Cornwall-Meadowbank. Of course, the Island final for the U18 AAA was going on between the host, Mid Isle Matrix, and the Pownal Taco Boyz Red Devils. We were

speaking with Mark McLane's brother-in-law there. Mark was a huge fan and a huge supporter of the U18 AAA Matrix. I know his spirit was in the building last night. The Matrix pulled it off with 28 seconds left, I think.

I do have to tell you a funny story, Mr. Speaker. I saw you there. My son came a little bit late and he was hungry. Anyway, there were not a lot of seats left, but we found two seats together and we go and sit there. He leans in to me and he's like, "Daddy, who are we cheering for?" My team got swept by Pownal this year and his team lost to Mid Isle all season long, so I was kind of trying to stay neutral. A lady leans in and she's like, "Now, you're sitting in Pownal territory; you're cheering for the Red Devils."

[Laughter]

**Hon. Z. Bell:** Anyway, Harrison quickly started cheering for the Red Devils after that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Thank you, minister, for mentioning that because now I don't have to. [Laughter]

The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

**T. DesRoches:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd just like to welcome everybody back to the Legislature today, everybody in the gallery, everybody watching from home, District 21, especially my faithful watchers – Joan, Elizabeth, Kathy, and can't forget about Dorothy.

After last weekend, my daughter winning gold, I thought that hockey was over for the season, but thanks to the Kensington Intermediate Senior High School, they started up high school hockey again a few years back. Last night, hockey is over again now. My daughter – they played last night against the Westisle team. They lost, and they're out of the high school championships, but it was some nice to see – half the girls on her team and half the girls on Westisle played together all year. To see the camaraderie out there, the laughing – I think one of the goalies kind of knocked someone down in the middle of a play there, and they all had a good laugh at that.

Just because hockey is over at that level, it's not completely over. Tonight is game 4 for the Summerside Capitals. They're back over in

Truro to try to even the score up at two apiece. There are lots of fan buses. I believe they're all full, but if anybody around Summerside is looking for a place to watch it, the Microtel is going to carry it in the lobby bar. There's going to be lots of great food and atmosphere and great hockey to watch.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

[1:20 p.m.]

It's a pleasure to rise today and welcome all my colleagues back, those tuning in from District 5 Mermaid-Stratford, and our gallery guests. I, too, am good friends with Amy and Trevor MacDonald. Also, a very important fact is these are our Page Jorja's parents here today to enjoy the proceedings. Welcome, and thank you for coming.

Also, I had the great opportunity to attend the big game last night as well at APM Centre to a packed facility. I don't know if I've seen a rink that packed in quite a while. I'd like to congratulate both teams on a great, competitive game. Certainly, my heart lies with the Pownal team, but both did really great on the ice, played a really strong, competitive game right until 28 seconds left, where I thought for sure we were going to go to overtime. Congratulations to the Speaker and all those that were connected to Mid Isle for that great game.

I also had a great opportunity to attend, along with the Minister of Finance and Affordability, Pownal Banner Night last night, where the teams got together at the rink and celebrated their successes from the season. Lots of community members there to celebrate that, so it was a wonderful evening altogether.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Land and Environment.

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

Welcome back, everyone. Welcome, everyone from District 4, everyone in the gallery. People are stealing my thunder because Amy and Trevor and Jorja are constituents of mine, and

also friends. Very good friends with Trevor's parents, as well. Thanks for joining us. I know you're probably thrilled to have Jorja here. I know she's thrilled to be here.

I just want to mention that the Belfast fire department has a major fundraising campaign on. They're going to renovate – they need more room in their bays – and have a lot of fundraising to do. They're selling tickets on a lawnmower right now, and hopefully someday soon, we'll need a lawnmower. If you look on Facebook, Belfast fire department, they're selling tickets.

I check out "Out and About in Murray Harbour" on a regular basis. Jackie MacNeill Doiron hosts that page, and she always has wonderful information of what's happening, not just in Murray Harbour but surrounding communities. I think tonight there's a meeting about the Northumberland Fisheries Festival. That doesn't happen until July, but they're getting ready. There's always great information there. If anyone wants to see what's happening in a lot of eastern PEI, you can check that out.

I just want to say it's so great to wake up and have a sunny day. Hopefully, we'll have many more of those. Hope we have a great day here in the Chamber.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**H. MacLennan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd just like to begin by welcoming those in the gallery today and those happening to be watching from District 23.

Tyne Valley was a very busy place last weekend, and that level of activity is carrying straight into this one. As the Premier had mentioned, the Western Rebels host the U16 AAA Maritime Championship, running from today, April 8<sup>th</sup>, to the 12<sup>th</sup> at their home rink in Tyne Valley. Teams and families from across the Maritimes are arriving in the community, and events like this simply don't happen without a tremendous amount of work from local volunteers, organizers, and minor hockey supporters. Their efforts make a real difference, not just for the players but for the community as a whole.

The championship gets underway tonight with the Island champs, the Eastern Dukes, taking on the host and defending champions, the Western Rebels, who won the title last year. This is high-quality, fast-paced hockey, and it's right in our own backyard. Of the five teams that are there this year, in the league standings, they're only separated by eight points. Very competitive hockey.

I encourage all Islanders to come on out, take in a game, support the young athletes, and experience the excitement that comes out with a championship event. I want to wish all the players, the coaches, the officials, and volunteers a safe, successful, and enjoyable tournament.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Housing and Communities.

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

I just want to rise and welcome all those in the gallery today, especially Darlene Ching and Kim Porter, who I've gotten to know over the years working in Executive Council with them. They were quite a duo. They were certainly dedicated employees and have been missed.

I, too, had the opportunity to attend the Taco Boyz/Matrix game last night. This winter, I've been questioning my love for the game of hockey, as a Leafs fan, but watching that game last night and watching those two young teams battle it out for a provincial championship certainly brought my understanding of the love of game back. It was a great game. There were a few of us there last night, and I'm sure Minister McLane was right there with us. He would have been cheering on the Matrix. Our constituents – it was interesting reading the program. There were a lot of grandparents, fathers, and names that I recognize from Districts 15, 18, and 16.

[1:25 p.m.]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Statements by Members

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

**Elliot Rossiter – Cerebral Palsy**

**H. MacLennan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize a remarkable, brave young boy from Lot 16: two-year-old Elliot Rossiter.

Elliot lives with cerebral palsy, and his journey has been one defined by incredible perseverance. While his parents, Kate DesRoches and Spencer Rossiter, were once told that Elliot might never walk, he is currently defying those odds and finding his mobility with the help of a specialized chair.

To give Elliot the best possible chance at independence, his family must travel far beyond our shores for specialized intensive therapy, seeking treatment in both Halifax and Alberta. Last fall, Elliot was one of seven children from Prince Edward Island who travelled to the private clinic in Calgary for vital care. However, this journey comes at a significant cost – approximately \$6,000 for a two-week session, not including housing and food – without additional provincial funding to bridge the gap.

The way the community has rallied behind this family is nothing short of inspiring. Recently, a benefit was held on March 27<sup>th</sup> at the Lot 16 Community Hall featuring a comedy performance by Shawn Hogan. Between that event and a dedicated lemonade stand in Miscouche last fall, the community raised over \$7,000 to support Elliot's treatment.

I want to thank all these individuals who have helped this young family, and every Islander who has contributed. Most importantly, I want to recognize Elliot and his parents for their strength. Their story reminds us of the power of community and the ongoing need of supporting our families who must travel to access essential care for their children.

Thank you.

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

### Access to Long-Term Care

**G. McNeilly:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In 2021, this government's own internal long-term care review warned that based on population and demographic trends, Prince Edward Island would need a 35 percent increase in long-term care beds by 2025 if it stayed on the current path.

That same review also made clear that high alternate level of care beds reduced the system's ability to admit patients, accept transfers from emergency departments, move inpatients to appropriate units, and ensure seniors receive care in the right setting.

So, what did this government do? Waited until 2024, then issued an RFP for 180 long-term care beds, and then cancelled it. Now, in 2026, exactly as predicted, our hospitals are overcapacity, access to primary care remains limited, and emergency rooms are backed up.

And how has this government chosen to respond? By creating dozens of long-term care beds in activity rooms and other small spaces in six public facilities, without regard for the essential roles those spaces play in residents' quality of life.

Yesterday, we heard the minister has asked Health PEI to review the decision at Colville Manor, but what about the other five facilities? And while the Speech from the Throne promises new long-term care beds, this government has ignored data, disregarded planning reports, and thrust together a makeshift plan, destabilizing our long-term care community.

Long-term care is a special place to so many amazing Islanders who have shaped this Island. I remind this government that this is their home. This is yet another example of a government making shortsighted decisions to fix its own problems without planning for long-term consequences.

Please, do better.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

### Regulation of Fuel Prices

**Hon. H. Perry:** Mr. Speaker, Islanders are feeling the pressure every time they pull up to gas pumps, and they are asking why this government is letting it happen.

Over the past two weeks, I have asked the Premier why his government refuses to follow the 2023 recommendation to align Prince Edward Island with the rest of Atlantic Canada by using the New York benchmark pricing formula. That recommendation was clear, and this government chose to ignore it. Now

Islanders are left footing the bill for that decision.

Fuel costs affect every Islander. People need to get to work. Businesses need to move goods and bring in supplies. When fuel prices rise, everything costs more – groceries, transportation, and the basic cost of living.

[1:30 p.m.]

I also asked the Premier to provide immediate relief by temporarily reducing the provincial portion of the HST. That's a choice he can make, and he has chosen not to. And I must correct the Premier. He suggested that when gas prices increase, provincial revenues do not increase. That is simply not correct. When the price of gas goes up, Islanders pay more, and this government collects more HST. When Islanders are paying more at the pump, this government is collecting more.

Islanders are looking for leadership, but what they are seeing instead is hesitation and weak leadership. This Premier has options. He can follow the 2023 recommendations. He can align with the rest of Atlantic Canada and he could provide targeted tax relief to Islanders, but time and time again, he chooses to do nothing instead.

Islanders are paying more at the pump, and they deserve a government that is willing to do something about it.

Thank you.

#### Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

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

#### **Family physicians**

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

Yesterday the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty asked about the number of family physicians. There is a total of 103 family doctors in PEI, including both longitudinal family medicine specialists and focused family medicine specialists. That includes 79 full-time positions and 24 part-time.

#### Questions by Members

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. H. Perry:** Mr. Speaker, on March 31<sup>st</sup>, the Premier stood in this House and said, "Absolutely," when asked if he would release all emails, texts, briefing notes, and correspondence related to this \$100,000 in exchange for waiving environmental protections. He also said that he would table his campaign contributions if the party allowed. He is the party leader; he can easily make that happen.

Yesterday the Minister of Environment tabled a lengthy and repetitive set of documents dating back to 2024, most of which were unrelated to what was requested.

#### **Environment permit investigation (further)**

My question to the Premier: Where is the information that you committed to disclose, and what is causing the delay?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

The first time I was able to view the documents that were tabled here yesterday was yesterday, after they were tabled. As the Leader of the Opposition said, it was a lengthy list of communications around the topic that he requested. I believe one day of the Legislature passed between me committing to bring that here and us tabling those documents.

Again, the public has all of the information that I have. Again yesterday, the public had the opportunity to see the information that was tabled here at the same time I did. In fact, I didn't review it until hours after it was tabled in this Legislature.

We're continuing with the open, transparent way we've been dealing with this situation from the beginning.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Actually, it was one week that he had to do this, and we saw no words in that tabling of his campaign contributions.

The timeline around this \$100,000 payment continues to become more and more confusing. We know this matter was referred to the RCMP on March 13<sup>th</sup>, and yesterday the Minister of

Environment tabled a letter confirming it was the Premier who hired this trusted friend to conduct this review. That review was returned to government on March 24<sup>th</sup>, yet the Premier tells this House he did not receive it until March 27<sup>th</sup> because he had a busy day meeting with the U.S. Ambassador to Canada, which slowed him down. Something doesn't add up.

Question to the Premier: Why did you fail to disclose that the former minister was present at that meeting with the U.S. ambassador?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

A lot of questions in there, and a lot of insinuations. I will again repeat:

The final version of the document that I received on March 27<sup>th</sup> was completed on March 27<sup>th</sup>, the same day I met with the U.S. ambassador; the same day the minister, who was still the minister at the time, attended a meeting with the U.S. ambassador.

I left Question Period on Friday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, went upstairs here in our government members office, and that is when I received a copy of that report – on March 27<sup>th</sup>. That was the same day that I went and met privately with the U.S. Ambassador to Canada. That's the same day I met with the U.S. Ambassador to Canada with a group of business leaders from Prince Edward Island to discuss relations with the U.S.

[1:35 p.m.]

The same evening, I went to the Rodd Royalty inn to deliver a keynote address at our party's AGM. The next morning, I hosted a breakfast with PC Youth at our party's AGM. By noon that day, we had taken action on this file that the Leader of the Opposition is referencing.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Oh my god, can you imagine the Premier having a busy day? Let's be clear: By the time that meeting took place, the Premier had known for 14 days. He had known 14 days prior to March 27<sup>th</sup> that this matter was referred to the RCMP.

The Canada-U.S. relationship continues to be strained. At a time when Islanders expect strong leadership, this raises serious concerns about judgement.

A question to the Premier: Do you believe it was appropriate for a minister under RCMP investigation to attend that same meeting?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Hon. R. Lantz:** Mr. Speaker, nobody has confirmed that anybody is under investigation. What was referred to the RCMP was by a reference from staff in the department under a Treasury Board policy, the fraud awareness and reporting policy, which they are obligated to report.

I have stood in this House and I have praised the professionalism of people in the staff and the role that they played in bringing something to light that they did not understand and they thought had the possibility to be fraud. That is yet to be determined. It is yet to be determined if there's an investigation into anything criminal, and to suggest that there is is untrue.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

But the question was about an RCMP investigation. I didn't say anything else after that. That was going on since March 13<sup>th</sup>.

Later today, I will table a photo of the former minister with this Premier and the U.S. ambassador on the eve of his removal from Cabinet. Given what the Premier knew at the time, this raises serious questions about how the situation was handled. It is clear that this Premier was trying to keep this scandal under wraps, and he only acted when it became apparent that the media found out and was going public with it. It appears this Premier did not act until it was to become public.

My question to the Premier: Will you admit that you had no intention of removing your minister until this became public?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

I'm proud of the way we've handled this situation, transparently and openly. We've provided all information publicly and here in this House. I look forward to the photo that the Leader of the Opposition intends to table later today.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. H. Perry:** Mr. Speaker, Islanders don't think they're being one bit open, nor do they think this Premier is being one bit transparent.

Islanders have now heard multiple conflicting answers about whether this \$100,000 "donation" has been returned. But the bigger issue remains: A private developer made a payment, and to Islanders, it looks like environmental protections were sold for a \$100,000 donation. That cannot be ignored.

Question to the Premier: Has the money been returned, yes or no?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

The Leader of the Opposition characterized this as something that looks like something and it can't be ignored, and that's exactly why we haven't ignored it, because it looks like something. I've talked about the perception of a conflict of interest being just as important as an actual conflict. That's all yet to be determined.

But we'll continue with the approach we've taken. We'll be honest, open, and transparent with the public and this Legislature throughout this process. That's what we'll continue to do.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. H. Perry:** But I have calls, I have emails, and I have texts from Islanders that do not believe this Premier is being open, being honest, or being transparent with them.

Affordability remains one of the top concerns for Islanders. Families are being asked to tighten their belts while this government continues to spend, spend, spend.

Yesterday, the Premier dismissed concerns about high fuel prices, saying we are in the middle of the pack for tax revenue, ignoring the fact that when gas prices rise, so does the HST that's collected.

### Gas prices (further)

Question to the Premier: Will you commit to a temporary HST reduction on fuel to provide immediate relief to Islanders? You can make this happen.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

Obviously, we are all subject to global forces that are putting extreme pressure on the price of oil and gasoline – refined petroleum products – at retail outlets.

[1:40 p.m.]

This member has suggested that we should be reviewing the formula for pricing of gasoline on Prince Edward Island. That is not the job of government; that's the job of the regulator. That review is taking place right now. They're reviewing the benchmark rates. They're reviewing the retail margins. They're consulting with industry stakeholders. My understanding is that there will be public consultations on this issue within three to four weeks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

But a review was done in 2023, and the recommendation was that PEI should align with the rest of Atlantic Canada. You chose to ignore it. It's always somebody else's fault, eh?

We're hearing from residents in the Evangeline region that the former minister's ties to the organization that received the \$100,000 payment run deeper than the Premier has acknowledged. The current address listed is the office of the former minister.

We have also learned his previous address was listed at the French Language School Board, where the former minister once worked as a superintendent. This raises serious concerns about the nature of this organization and its connections to the former minister's political network.

### Environment permit investigation (further)

Question to the Premier: When did you first become aware of these connections?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Hon. R. Lantz:** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is not being very specific about these connections other than that these are people connected to the school system in the Evangeline area, and that's not a surprise to me. It's a very tight-knit community.

The project, I understand, that they were proposing to do with this donation was centered around the school community in the area. Projects that they've undertaken in the past have been centered around education and the school community. From what I can tell, these are educators who are very involved with their community and have undertaken projects in the past to support their community, and my understanding is that this was no different.

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

**R. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, in my political past, I had the privilege of serving as a minister with three different departments, working alongside six different deputy ministers. In every case, the minister and deputy operated as a unit, delivering services to Islanders on behalf of the government.

I made it very clear to staff there were to be no secrets, no withheld information. I, as minister, did not want to learn of difficult or controversial matters in the newspaper, on the radio, or worse, on the floor of the Legislature. During my tenure as minister, I received calls in the evening and on the weekend. That is the deputy-minister relationship; you are always kept informed.

Question to the Minister responsible as Attorney General. You told this House yesterday that you were not informed by your deputy on March 13<sup>th</sup>, the same day the Premier was informed of a \$100,000 donation to a minister's charity of choice, which was handed over to the RCMP.

I understand from your statements in the Legislature yesterday that you were not informed until March 27<sup>th</sup> about an ongoing investigation into a sitting colleague of yours, and your deputy was withholding this information to protect you.

**Environment permit investigation (further)**

Question to the minister: Do you believe it was appropriate that you, as minister of the Crown, was not informed of this matter earlier, considering your sworn responsibility is to uphold the law?

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

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

The member across asks a good question. He's been a minister of a lot of departments, but he's never been the Attorney General. This policy protects the minister – the Attorney General. My deputy kept me removed from this process on purpose, and he did everything by the letter of the law. I respect him for that. The policy was followed, the process was followed, and I'm satisfied.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**R. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, that answer is actually quite concerning. It should be alarming to all Islanders, especially given the trend from this government by throwing democratic and institutional norms out the window.

From proroguing the Legislature twice a year, this Premier's treating the interim leadership job as a permanent position, and trying to sweep another \$100,000 under the rug, the pattern is clear. We've been saying for months that the government is interested in protecting their jobs, and not respecting Islanders.

Question to the Attorney General: When you were first appointed to this portfolio, did you instruct your deputy to shield you from all information of a political, sensitive, or embarrassing nature? What was he actually protecting you from?

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

**Hon. B. Thompson:** No.

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

**R. Henderson:** Well, that's not much of an answer.

The Attorney General's duty is to ensure government acts in accordance with the law and to uphold the rule of law in public interest – non-partisan interest.

[1:45 p.m.]

The matter began to surface in late February. The Deputy Minister of Justice brought it to the Premier on March 13<sup>th</sup>. The Attorney General himself, as stated in this Legislature, was not informed by his deputy for 14 days after the RCMP was contacted. This wouldn't have come to light if it wasn't for an anonymous public tip or the local media.

Question to the Attorney General: Minister, to me, this is highly unusual protocol. It is difficult to imagine any deputy withholding a development of this magnitude from their minister, let alone the Attorney General of this province, especially if it's been referred to the RCMP. Do you believe your deputy deliberately concealed this information from you, and given what has now transpired, do you still have confidence in your deputy minister?

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

**Hon. B. Thompson:** 100 percent, Mr. Speaker. As I said, he followed policy and the process, so yes, I do.

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

**R. Henderson:** It's good you have confidence in your minister, but this sounds so highly unlikely that there would be a situation where they would be working side by side as minister and as a deputy and not be kept informed. I'm assuming he meets with his deputy fairly regularly.

Every day there are difficult and sensitive matters moving through the Attorney General's office and the province's broader justice system. If the minister is kept unaware of an active RCMP investigation into a sitting Cabinet colleague, one must ask: Who's actually in charge?

Question to the Attorney General: Why would Islanders have any confidence in your department, and what assurances can you give Islanders that you are in full command of your department?

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

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

If there's any doubt, I can assure you I am in charge of the department. I have full, 100 percent faith in my deputy. He's an extremely talented individual that works very, very hard, and he follows processes to the letter of the law. I appreciate that.

As the Attorney General, I do not have access to the courts. I do not have access to the Crown. I do not have access to investigations of the.... If the member wants, I can give him a briefing on the department, on the role of the Attorney General after this, or any time. I can even table something.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**R. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we want to know that the minister knows what's going on within his department. He doesn't have to direct every detail and all the minutia of the Department of Justice, but he should know what's going on.

As someone who has sat in this Legislative Assembly for many years and has shown a deep respect for this place, it makes me uncomfortable to see a government so flippant with the rules of the Legislature and the basic democratic principles Islanders cherish. The news that came out in Question Period yesterday, that the Attorney General was so uninformed of such a matter, is truly remarkable and warrants its own investigation.

I'm going to have a question to the Premier. As the deputy minister serves at the Premier's pleasure, are you comfortable with a deputy minister that does not keep PEI's Attorney General informed on serious allegations such as the one that we're talking about today, the Ocean resort file?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

I'll again echo the comments of our Attorney General and comments I've already made here, and that is my full confidence and appreciation

for the way that the public service handled this situation, and that includes our Deputy Attorney General.

I referenced the fraud awareness and reporting policy of Treasury Board, which is what was followed in this case. As the Attorney General has noted, the deputy followed that policy and the processes in place there to the letter of the law, to the letter of the policy, and that included reporting this up through the chain. The Attorney General was not required to be informed, and in fact, that is the appropriate step to take to keep the Attorney General out of this process at that point.

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

**G. McNeilly:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are significant issues facing Islanders in terms of long-term care. In this government's rush to relieve overcapacity in acute care hospitals where patients are discharged, left waiting for long-term care, this government chose to create an ever-changing number of temporary long-term care beds across six public facilities. The problem is that those long-term care facilities are full and members working there are pretty stressed out.

The minister said yesterday, "I asked Health PEI to review the decision" – regarding these four planned long-term care beds in Souris at Colville Manor.

### **Long-term care (further)**

Minister, question to you: Did you also review the five other locations affected by this, and where are the beds going in Colville Manor? Where are those four beds going?

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

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

I wouldn't say that it's just a rush to beds anywhere we can. Obviously, we need the beds. We have an issue with overcapacity. They're moving as fast as they can to add beds.

[1:50 p.m.]

I did ask Health PEI to review this decision, in particular for Colville Manor. In the other

facilities, it's affecting mostly the day program, which we want to move to a temporary location for a number of months until Andrews – which I believe has 84 beds coming online, hopefully late fall. We'll be able to take those temporary beds and move those folks to there, but we're not going to cancel the day programming. We just want to find alternative locations until we can move those programs back to the manors.

In terms of Souris, I think you asked exactly where those four beds are going to go. We're going to look at all options at the Colville Manor to see if there are other solutions we can find instead of taking up the activity room.

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

**G. McNeilly:** So, the minister is now talking about day programs, which I know quite a bit about because Brecken House is in PE Home. It serves 66 families, it has a waitlist of almost 20 people, and the minister is coming along and talking to the staff about moving this without a plan. These are secure wings, there are bathing programs there, families rely on the respite care, and now the minister is standing up and talking about day programs and moving them temporarily. Come on.

Staff are stressed out, and this is not the way you operate a long-term care facility. This is not the way you operate long-term care in Prince Edward Island.

Minister: Will you ensure that each of those day programs has a safe and secure place to go, with the requirements they need, before any action is taken?

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

**Hon. C. Deagle:** The short answer is yes, Mr. Speaker. We're not going to move anyone or change anything until there's a safe alternative location for those programs. We're not going to stop those programs; we want to continue to offer them.

The hon. member mentioned the number of beds in his first – how many beds we'll be adding to the system over the next couple of years. We do plan on adding upwards of 200 beds over the next two years. Those vendors have been notified and we're in negotiations to sign those contracts now with them on those 200 beds.

We'll be issuing an RFP for Kings County for an additional up to 48 beds, also including the 80-some beds at Andrews which should come online late fall – almost close to the new year, but late fall. There will be about 330 new long-term care beds in the next two years.

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

**M. MacFarlane:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday during Question Period, in response to questions from Charlottetown-West Royalty regarding the Souris doctor who is moving to Charlottetown, the Minister of Health stated: “Dr. Malone asked to work at the new patient medical home at UPEI. His fee-for-service model doesn't fit within that model.”

### Physician retention

Question to the Minister of Health: We have a doctor, minister, who cares for about 1,500 rural Islanders, and you're telling us that we could lose him because of a model? Does Health PEI not have either the authority or the support or the motivation to be flexible during a very unique situation to save 1,500 rural Islanders their doctor?

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

**Hon. C. Deagle:** Mr. Speaker, I won't stand for this political interference from the Leader of the Third Party.

However, what I would say is that in this particular case, the individual was offered a number of other locations to practice and open a clinic. He's more than welcome to take all of his patients with him to Charlottetown.

Very personal reasons of why he has to move to Charlottetown. That's completely understandable, and it's very tragic, and we want to be supportive. We're willing to meet with him and work with him; it just can't be at the UPEI patient medical home. We're open to any other location.

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

**M. MacFarlane:** Well, Mr. Speaker, if it's the fee-for-service model, that's something that the government or Health PEI or whoever is running health care in this province – it seems to vary

day to day. If this cannot be overcome by this government... The Minister of Health should be supporting Health PEI to be flexible, to come up with solutions that work for our Island doctors and to get access to primary care for Islanders. That's the point of this. That's the goal that this government should be focused on.

Was Dr. Malone, Mr. Minister, willing to accept a contract with a blended model?

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

**Hon. C. Deagle:** No, he wasn't, Mr. Speaker. He wants to remain as a fee-for-service doctor, which is completely his right. That's fine.

In terms of the UPEI patient medical home, that model is kind of the carrot to attract new physicians to move in and take patients off the patient registry. We can't just have doctors with current panels moving into that new medical home. We rent space in multiple locations across Charlottetown, across PEI. We're not just moving in doctors that take their current panels into the UPEI patient medical home. It's used to attract new physicians and to take people off the patient registry as it is now.

[1:55 p.m.]

We can't keep making one-off deals with family doctors. The Medical Society has asked us to stop. Health PEI doesn't want to do that. We have to standardize it across the province. Johan, the chief medical officer, has pleaded with me. He said: “Please support me on this decision.” I will not politically interfere with his decision like the Leader of the Third Party wants me to.

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

**M. MacFarlane:** I think the minister and this government have completely lost the plot on the goal here, which is to keep Island doctors.

We have a doctor here with 1,500 rural Islanders on his panel who wants to stay here, wants to practice, and for some reason, the shiny new UPEI medical school, or MUN medical school, is not available because it's empty. It's empty, and we're not allowing the doctor to come in and work in the facility. This is mind-blowing and it's unacceptable for Islanders who are waiting – 30,000, close to 40,000 now – for a

doctor, and this government refuses to try and help.

I would like for this minister to explain, in commonsense terms so that we can all understand, why you're not supporting this doctor to keep his patients, whether it's at UPEI medical school or whether it's some other clinic in Charlottetown – to keep his patients, who are calling us every day wondering who they're going to have for a doctor.

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

**Hon. C. Deagle:** Mr. Speaker, this physician is more than welcome to work at another location in Charlottetown, which has been offered to him. We encourage him. We want to keep him working here. We need every family physician we can get. We don't want those 1,500 patients to go on the registry. There just has to be some – he has to be reasonable, somewhat.

We can't just have every doctor coming to us saying, "Give me what I want or I quit." That's not how it works. The Medical Society does not support that. Health PEI doesn't support it. Johan, the chief medical officer, and his team at Health PEI are amazing and excellent. It's unfortunate that the Leader of the Third Party is calling into question his professionalism, his experience, which is decades – decades. Actually, I would encourage him to sit down with him and have a conversation about primary care and what his plans are for the future.

We've just recruited a new doctor, Dr. Workentin, from Toronto. He's going to be a leader with Johan and his team. I know he's opened up – his recent line of work is opening – getting a patient medical home in Toronto off the ground with thousands and thousands of patients; I think 100 doctors.

He's done an excellent job. He's recruited an ER physician to the QEH. One of the top pediatricians in Canada is here because of Johan. He is an excellent, excellent person to have in that role. We just have to support him and stop politically interfering like the third party is.

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

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

The electric power issues facing our province are many and complex. Decades of a lack of planning by both of the old parties and a company with a monopoly here that cares first and foremost about providing consistent returns to its shareholders, rather than providing Islanders with consistent and affordable energy, has left us in a big pickle.

The Premier promised that the first order of business during this sitting would be legislation to put Islanders' needs ahead of Maritime Electric's, but yesterday, he hinted that it actually might take years to put this in place. With this delay, not only is government prolonging the risk of blackouts, but if the combustion turbines are approved and purchased, all opportunities to create an energy future for Prince Edward Island that is clean, reliable, and affordable will be lost.

#### **Maritime Electric (further)**

A question to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: How can you justify such an unnecessary delay of years?

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

**Hon. S. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question and the important preamble. I know you fit a lot into that, but those are important words that we have to listen to.

I think what the Premier was referring to was the regulatory framework. It might take a couple of years. I'm pretty sure (Indistinct) understanding of that. My goal from day one was to get to the bottom of what performance-based regulations will look like on Prince Edward Island. There's a lot to go behind that.

That old cost-of-service model that Maritime Electric is operating under – and they're doing their best job that they can under that outdated model, and that's why the Premier suggested this change, and it's why I'm acting on it right away.

My goal is to have that legislation ready to roll for this fall. There's a lot of work, I'm understanding, to get that done but I'm committed to doing it. That regulatory framework that the Premier talked about will roll out from there, hon. member.

[2:00 p.m.]

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

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

There is currently, of course, an application before IRAC from Maritime Electric to purchase two used diesel turbines at a cost of somewhere around \$400 million. They're asking IRAC for a really quick decision to commit \$50 million of Islanders' money for a non-refundable down payment prior to actually approving these diesel generators. Diesel prices, of course, are skyrocketing, and fossil fuel-based generators are, I believe, destined to be stranded assets long before we've ended up paying for them 50 years from now.

A question to the same minister: Is government going to come forward with alternative solutions and step in to stop these massive increases that Islanders are going to be faced with for decades to come?

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

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

That process is before IRAC right now. That is going. I understand you're an intervener, or friend of the commission, so to speak, to intervene in that as well. IRAC is doing their due diligence; you've seen that. They're questioning a lot of the information that Maritime Electric has brought forward. They do, I would agree; they want a quick decision on it, but I'm glad that there's not a quick decision because that's very important.

You talked about it yesterday in your response to the Speech from the Throne about how it's a monumental decision for PEI to invest that kind of money into something. That process is happening, and you've heard me speak about the things that I can take action on as the minister here:

- Replacing those subsea cables – we needed that application in and done, but we've got that in and we got that done.
- The expression of interest on battery storage for PEI – I think that's incredibly important and I want to thank the department for listening and getting that out the door in my first month I was there.

- The modernizing of the electricity regulations and framework – you've heard the Premier talk about it. I've explained that I want to get that done as fast as I can, but I want it done right too, hon. member.

- The Atlantic partnerships – I think that's important. The federal government wants us working as a region to get success. The independent system operator comes under that as well.

- And as you and I have talked about, the demand-side management is probably the most critical thing about bringing Islanders' usage down but also saving them money at the same time.

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

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

I appreciate the answer, and also the minister's five-point plan to do something about this problem that's been brewing for years.

The battery, however, that's being proposed by this government has a maximum size of 50 megawatts, and that's nowhere near big enough to provide power during those peak times for as long as we need it to keep the lights on for Islanders, to make sure that we have confidence in that.

Islanders will actually end up paying twice: once through massive and long-term rate increases to pay back Maritime Electric's spending spree on the combustion turbines, and once for the batteries through the PEI Energy Corporation, which actually aren't big enough to do what we need them to do.

To the same minister: Will the government actually commit to investing on behalf of Islanders in a battery system that is big enough and long enough lasting so that we can be confident that the lights will still on and that we can do away with the dirty, expensive, old-world proposal that's coming forward from Maritime Electric?

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

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

There are a lot of assumptions in that question, hon. member, about approvals from IRAC over that plan too.

The expression of interest that we put out there is intentionally wide open and broad, and I know some of the proposals that are coming in already have some great ideas. What you're proposing is that our expression of interest is trying to replace the application process in front of IRAC, which is not true.

We're going to need some sort of a plan regardless of if this is turned down or not. So, what I'm trying to do, and as quickly as I can, is to help over the next – because we know whatever plan is approved by IRAC is going to take three, four, it could even be five years.

What I'm trying to do right now is get something that helps with our peaking problem. You know we don't have an energy problem the vast majority of time; we have a peaking problem, and that's why I'm trying to get an expression of interest out on the battery. A 10- or 20-megawatt – that could work – a 50 could work, or maybe we look at something bigger, but I'm trying to leave that expression of interest wide open so that we get a sense of what's out there.

I commit to you: I'll act on what is in the best interest of Islanders.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-Pownal.

**B. Curran:** Mr. Speaker, we recently heard some very disappointing news coming out of our neighbours from New Brunswick. The Premier over there has announced she wants to put tolls on the highway in the Aulac area. Now, we all know that that stretch of road is a vital lifeline for our province. It's one of the key ways our food gets to market and our families get to where they need to go.

[2:05 p.m.]

We've been working hard here on this side to lower the tolls on the Confederation Bridge and to make the ferry even more affordable, but it feels like our neighbours are trying to build a wall of costs right at our front door. It's a step backward for trade, and it's just not right.

### Proposed NB highway toll

A question to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: What is this government doing to stand up for Islanders and to tell New Brunswick that putting a tax on a primary route to this Island is completely unacceptable?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

I agree with everything that the member is saying here and asking in this question. It's a very important question.

I have already spoken to Premier Susan Holt in New Brunswick about this. In fact, when I called her, she was in a Cabinet meeting. She stepped out of the Cabinet meeting to answer the phone, and she said: "I know why you're calling."

Of course she does, because at every table of the Canadian Premiers that I ever attended – the First Ministers meeting, including the Prime Minister – I advocated for the removal – if not, the lowering – of the tolls on the Confederation Bridge and the ferries. I positioned that in the midst of all of the discussion about interprovincial trade as a barrier to interprovincial trade, and that was an accepted premise and, of course, why the federal government was cooperative in reducing those tolls on the ferry and the bridge.

But that's exactly what this is, and that's exactly why I'm surprised that Premier Holt is putting this toll in place, because it is a barrier to trade. Furthermore, it exempts New Brunswickers. This is what I take exception with. We pay the tolls, Prince Edward Islanders, on the ferry and the bridge. Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are exempting their own citizens at the Cobequid Pass, and now this proposed toll at Aulac. It's unacceptable.

I'll continue to advocate with both my Maritime Premiers about these tolls, about reducing interprovincial trade barriers, just as we did with our advocacy to reduce the tolls on the bridge and ferry.

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

**B. Curran:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Premier, for that answer.

This isn't just a minor inconvenience; it's a direct hit to the pocketbooks of our farmers and our fishers who already deal with some of the highest shipping costs per kilometre in the whole country, and to add another toll just makes a tough job even harder.

Our primary producers work too hard to have their margins chewed up by a tollbooth in Aulac. We should be knocking down barriers between our provinces, not putting up new ones that make it more expensive to do business.

A question to the Minister of Agriculture: Has your department looked at how these tolls will hurt our agricultural and fishing sectors, and will you join me in calling on our counterparts across the strait to scrap this plan before it hurts our rural economy?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

**Hon. B. Thompson:** A good question, Mr. Speaker.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that this is not a good approach that the New Brunswick government is taking on our core industries here on this Island. It's obviously going to hit a bottom line of our truckers and our exporters of our products.

We thought we had this – as the Premier said, in the interprovincial trade talks, most of the provinces were moving forward and we thought New Brunswick was a key player in that, but apparently, they're showing that they're not. I will have conversations with my counterparts, for sure, to see how we can avert some of these expenses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**B. Curran:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are an Island with two main ways off by car – the bridge and the ferry – and we value them both, but with the ferry service becoming increasingly more unreliable, more Islanders are being forced onto the road through Aulac just to ensure they can make it to their appointments or get their goods to market on time.

When one link is down, the other becomes even more critical. Adding a toll at Aulac right now

feels like a penalty for an island that's already struggling with transport stability. Even in New Brunswick, Liberal times are tough times.

A question to the Minister of Transportation: Will the minister make it clear to New Brunswick and the federal government that because of the current uncertainty with our ferry service, the Aulac corridor is even more essential than ever, and that we expect cooperation in keeping our province connected, not more barriers for our goods and our people?

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

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

[2:10 p.m.]

It doesn't feel like we're breaking down a lot of internal trade barriers here in Canada. I want to express my public disappointment with this decision. What's disappointing is that New Brunswick is holding up the examples of tolls in Nova Scotia and our bridge toll as defending their decision. It's disappointing when the Premier has worked so hard to bring down those tolls, and then, they're adding new ones. So, yeah, I'm expressing my public disappointment in the whole thing.

Just one more thing before I sit down: I want to remind all our friends in New Brunswick that it is very much free to take that bridge and move to PEI.

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

**H. MacLennan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In last fall's capital budget, I was very encouraged to see a clear commitment to new affordable housing projects across our province. Specifically, I was very pleased to see the Rural Municipality of Tyne Valley included in those plans. For a community like ours, these aren't just buildings; they are the foundation for keeping our families and our workforce close to home.

We've been waiting for a concrete update on the scale of this project to ensure it meets the growing demand we see every day at the local level.

**Affordable housing**

Question to the Minister of Housing and Communities: Minister, how many new affordable housing units is the government planning to build in Tyne Valley under this current capital plan?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Housing and Communities.

**Hon. K. Dollar:** Thank you for the question, member.

Right now – you are correct; it was in the capital budget last fall – we are looking at six affordable units for Tyne Valley.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, first supplementary.

**H. MacLennan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As many in this House will remember, our community faced an incredibly difficult time in October of 2022, when a fire destroyed a six-unit senior apartment right in the heart of Tyne Valley. While we had worked hard to move forward, that loss served as a stark reminder of just how vital centralized housing is to our community.

It isn't just about bricks and mortar. It's about ensuring that our residents – especially those who have spent their lives building Tyne Valley – can remain close to the essential services they rely on, and more importantly, stay right where they belong: surrounded by their families and their neighbours.

The people of Tyne Valley are anxious to see these plans turn into reality. They want to know where the heart of this new development will be.

Question to the Minister of Housing and Communities: Has the minister or his department determined the specific location where these units will be constructed within the municipality?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Housing and Communities.

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

There were two sites that have been identified. The second site, I think, has been identified through your advocacy, member. We have the

site where we lost the six units in 2022; we also have the old site of the Stewart Memorial Hospital.

Currently, both sites are being analyzed by the Department of Transportation, and I am of the understanding that we are leaning towards the Stewart Memorial site.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, second supplementary.

**H. MacLennan:** Thank you, minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we talk about housing in rural PEI, we have to ensure we are talking about the right kind of housing for everyone, regardless of their physical ability or their bank account balance. In District 23, we have residents who are finding it increasingly difficult to find a place that is both within their means and built to accommodate their mobility needs. Affordability is one thing, but if a unit isn't accessible, it remains out of reach for many of the people who need it the most.

We want to ensure that this new development is a purposeful addition to our community – one that provides a sense of security for our low-income earners and those living with disabilities who want to remain independent in their home village.

Question to the Minister of Housing and Communities: When can residents anticipate the construction of these new units to begin, and can the minister confirm that this project will include units specifically designed for low-income individuals and those requiring fully accessible living spaces?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Housing and Communities.

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

Member, we are going into the design phase right now. When we get the design phase, we'll go out to tender or RFP. We will be starting construction no later than spring of '27 if not earlier, hopefully.

As far as accessibility goes, member, there will be two fully accessible units. The other four, we'll call them senior-friendly units.

Also, I want to point out here, with affordable housing on PEI, we're beating the trends nationally. We are 25 percent of your income, and in the rest of the country, it's 30.

Thank you.

[2:15 p.m.]

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

**G. McNeilly:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Minister of Health stands up and talks about futuristic, private solutions to a long-term care question that's affecting the public long-term care sector – it's affecting Riverview Manor, Beach Grove, PE Home, Summerset Manor, Maplewood Manor. The staff there are struggling. They're working at full capacity, and you're talking of putting an additional 31 beds in? They can't take it.

#### **Long-term care (further)**

Minister, what are you doing right now to support the hardworking staff that are going beyond what we can even imagine in there? I'm worried about them. Minister, what is your plan for adding new beds in and taxing the staff? What are you going to do for the staff right now? Because they need your support, and they need our support in these difficult working conditions.

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

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

The hon. member has made a very good point that the staff, not only in our long-term care facilities but right across the health system, including in our ERs and all wards in our hospitals and facilities, are taxed right now because we've been running overcapacity for three-plus months.

In order to staff a lot of these temporary beds, we need to bring in agency staffing, unfortunately, for some of them; not all of them, and not in all cases, but it's just the reality. I'm not going to lie and try and sugarcoat it. This is the reality that we're in right now. We don't want to use agency staffing, but when we're trying to increase this many beds and add them

so quickly, sometimes it's the last resort and it has to be used.

I know how hard the staff are working. It isn't ideal, bringing in agency staffing when they're being paid more than the person next to them. Listen, I truly believe that we want to get off of using agency staffing, but in terms of this, in this case, we do have to resort to some agency staffing. We're there to support all of our existing staff in these facilities.

We want to work with them to find the best possible solutions when we do add these temporary beds.

**Speaker:** And so ends Question Period, about five minutes later than it should have been. I think we all know, members, where that extra time came from, so review the rules. Perhaps I'll send a reminder out by email so you can review them.

#### Statements by Ministers

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

**Hon. C. Deagle:** I'm not used to standing up and speaking so much, Mr. Speaker. This new role is a taxing one but enjoyable, and I'm up for the challenge.

#### **Pharmacy Plus PEI**

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome Erin MacKenzie, who is the director of the PEI Pharmacy Association, and Michelle Wyand, the registrar of the PEI College of Pharmacy, who are with us the gallery today.

I am pleased to say that Pharmacy Plus PEI continues to improve access to health care for Islanders. Recently the program was expanded to include strep throat testing and treatment as part of sore throat assessments. Since that expansion, there have been more than 1,300 sore throat assessments completed at participating pharmacies.

Pharmacists are essential health care providers who enhance patient care, improve system efficiency, and help us meet the growing health care demands. By supporting pharmacists to work to their scope of practice, we are reducing pressure on primary care providers, walk-in

clinics, and emergency departments across the province, allowing them to focus on more complex patient care needs.

Under the Pharmacy Plus PEI program, pharmacists can assess and prescribe for 35 common ailments and conditions at participating pharmacies, and over the past three years there have been over 260,000 assessments completed.

I want to thank our local pharmacists for providing Islanders with timely access to health care and for their continued support in making the Pharmacy Plus PEI program a success.

I also want to thank the PEI Pharmacy Association and the PEI College of Pharmacy for their long, ongoing collaboration and supporting pharmacists to work to their full scope of practice. This is a perfect example of working together and expanding care within our patient medical neighbourhoods.

We will continue to find innovative ways to improve health care so Islanders can receive care closer to home.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Responding to the minister's statement, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

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

Welcome, Erin and Michelle, to the gallery.

I appreciate this. I, too, stand in support of Pharmacy Plus. I was just waiting for an announcement on how we could make it better. Instead, we didn't hear anything there. I'm worried about the rural component of pharmacists in Prince Edward Island. I'm worried about the need for pharmacists in Prince Edward Island as these programs ramp up. Those are the things I'm worried about.

[2:20 p.m.]

I thought the minister would have stood up – the Province still will not pay for pharmacists to give injections. That's important. People have to pay out of pocket or go to a clinic for their B12 shots. The Provera birth control – I thought that might have been an announcement on birth control, or Prolia, which is an osteoporosis injection – and tetanus shots as well. I thought

one or any of those could have been announced now.

The option is to pay out of pocket or go to the ER. I mean, this is a great program if it's there at the stage – we and the minister.... I agree, this is good, but these are the gaps and these are things that I was looking for as the health care critic today. I didn't hear them; maybe next time.

Welcome to the gallery; continue your good work and serving Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**M. MacFarlane:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, minister, for the announcement.

I guess much like the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, the continued downloading of additional services onto pharmacists, local pharmacies, is presenting a challenge to the pharmacies.

You know, the Pharmacy Plus program is a wonderful program. Out my way, the South Shore Pharmacy has recently diverted almost 30 strep patients away from either the walk-in clinic or from the ER department because they had the ability to provide that service. That's great; that's helping our primary care system out.

But the challenge is, of course, as has already been mentioned, the injections need to be compensated. We're going to give more and more obligations onto the pharmacists. They need to be compensated for the additional work that they do because that takes time away from other services that they're providing, and it places more stress onto the system.

The other concern that's come to light, too, on the pharmacy front is that the patient medical home model now is sometimes taking pharmacists out of the small rural community pharmacies, which – they have the ability to operate outside of the 9 to 5 time frame, but if they don't have the pharmacists on staff to be able to do that, then they're shutting down early, they're closed, they're reducing hours. That, in turn, is having a negative impact on Islanders' ability to get into the pharmacies to get access, that type of primary care that's being offered by those pharmacies.

There are lots of challenges there. Great program. The former Minister of Health would sing the praises of the Pharmacy Plus program, as she should, because it is a wonderful program. But let's just keep up, focusing on what we need to do to support the pharmacists who are delivering the program every step of the way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a letter from Jamie Aiken, the Clerk of the Executive Council to the Deputy Minister of Land and Environment confirming that it was indeed the Premier himself who hired Murray Murphy to investigate the approval permit for the Summerside golf course. I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a social media post, the former minister meeting with the Premier and the ambassador of the U.S.A. on March 27<sup>th</sup>, two weeks after the Premier knew that this was sent to the RCMP and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

**G. McNeilly:** Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table three letters regarding the long-term care issues in the questions that I asked today – questions that we

don't have answers to – to the minister and to the CEO of Health PEI: Where are the beds located, the number of beds that will be installed at each facility, and additional staffing, and additionally, who is making these decisions? I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

**K. Bernard:** Thank you.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a document entitled "The Voice of Maritime Women: The Unspoken Burden of Women's Health." It's a survey summary from the IWK Foundation's women's health survey, and I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Third Party, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

[2:25 p.m.]

**K. Bernard:** Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table another document, "The Voice of PEI Women: The Unspoken Burden of Women's Health," which is a survey summary that was created from the one I just tabled with a specific focus on the voices of PEI women by the IWK Foundation women's health survey, and I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Third Party, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

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

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

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be entitled *An Act to Amend the Real Property Act*, and I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Workforce and

Advanced Learning, that the same be now received and read a first time.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

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

**Speaker:** Minister, would you like to describe your bill?

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

This bill amends the *Real Property Act* to update provisions respecting the partitions of the land in respect to proceedings involving minors. These changes are intended to better align with the act contemporary civil procedure in the Supreme Court, and to clarify the legislative text.

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

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

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *Charitable Lotteries Act*, and I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability, that the same be now received and read a first time.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Clerk:** Bill No. 19, *Charitable Lotteries Act*, read a first time.

**Speaker:** Minister has further details?

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

The purpose of this bill is to provide a modern legislation framework for the licensing of charitable lotteries in Prince Edward Island consistent with other Canadian jurisdictions.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Land and Environment.

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

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Prince Edward Island Lands Protection Act*, and I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Housing and Communities, that the same be now received and read a first time.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Clerk:** Bill No. 20, *An Act to Amend the Prince Edward Island Lands Protection Act*, read a first time.

**Speaker:** Minister, a further description?

**Hon. D. Compton:** This bill will strengthen landownership rules for non-residents by requiring them to obtain Executive Council approval before acquiring an interest in more than one municipal property. Municipal property is defined as any property of one acre or less located within a municipality that has an official plan. This type of property is currently exempt from the act. This bill will bring it in line with the treatment of non-municipal lands.

Motions Other Than Government

Orders Other Than Government

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

**C. Simpson:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member from O'Leary-Inverness, that the 18<sup>th</sup> order of the day be now read.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Clerk:** Order No. 18, *Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act*, Bill No. 104, ordered for second reading.

**Speaker:** Member, a further description of the bill?

**C. Simpson:** Not at this time.

**Speaker:** Okay.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

**C. Simpson:** I move, seconded by the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness, that the said bill be now read a second time.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**C. Simpson:** I'm sorry.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member from O'Leary-Inverness, that the House do now resolve itself – oh, I'm sorry.

**Speaker:** No, it's being read a second time, member.

**C. Simpson:** Yes. Thank you.

**Clerk:** Bill 104, *Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act*, read a second time.

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

**C. Simpson:** Thank you. I should have turned the page, Mr. Speaker. I would have known the next step.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness, 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.

You're doing a great job, member.

**C. Simpson:** Well, you know, turn to page 2.

**Speaker:** I'd like to call upon the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque to chair Committee of the Whole.

[2:30 p.m.]

[M. MacKay in the chair]

**Chair:** The House is in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intitled *Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act*.

Would you like to ask some strangers to join you on the floor today?

**C. Simpson:** Thank you, Chair. Yes, I would.

**Chair:** Granted.

Good afternoon. Can you both introduce yourselves into the microphone for the record, please?

**Tammy Sanderson:** I am Tammy Sanderson.

**Madison Ranta:** My name is Madison Ranta. I am the director of policy and public engagement with the opposition office.

**Chair:** Thank you both for joining us.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** General questions.

**Chair:** Okay. Before we get going, hon. member, do you want to give an overview?

**C. Simpson:** Yes, Thank you, Chair.

This bill seeks to introduce a version of what is known as Clare's Law on Prince Edward Island. Originally an initiative out of the United Kingdom, Clare's Law is named after a woman in England who was murdered by her former domestic partner. While police knew that Clare's partner was dangerous and had a history of violent crime, they were unable to disclose this information to Clare.

This legislation is meant to empower people with the ability to find out if their intimate partner may pose a safety risk to them based on the information available to police.

If an applicant meets the criteria and is determined to be a person at risk, they receive a risk assessment that includes safety information to help them make an informed decision about their next steps. The law aims to strike a balance between protecting people's privacy and trying to keep people safe.

In Canada, a version of Clare's Law is currently in place in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Newfoundland and Labrador. Legislation has also been passed in New Brunswick and in Manitoba and is in the process of being operationalized in both these jurisdictions.

With this bill, I'm looking to add PEI to the list of jurisdictions where this tool is available here in Canada. Part of our motivation in introducing this legislation comes from stories we've heard from community members who have survived intimate partner violence.

[2:35 p.m.]

Today, I'm joined with Tammy Sanderson, who approached us last year about the possibility of introducing a Clare's Law regime here in Prince Edward Island. We know that the rates of intimate partner violence on PEI are concerning. In 2019, the Prince Edward Island RCMP L

Division received 183 reports of violence in relationships. Charlottetown Police received 162 reports of family violence in the same year, and in 2018, the Summerside Police department received 65 reports of assaults that met domestic violence criteria.

Again, those are only the reports that are made to police. Of those reports, those are categorized as domestic violence. It is likely that the true figure is higher than that.

If there is an additional tool that we can make available here on PEI to help protect people, I believe it is our duty to do so. We need to empower people with risk assessment information before things escalate to becoming a criminal matter. That is what we are trying to absolutely achieve with this bill.

**Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I'll start off taking names for questions.

**C. Simpson:** Excuse me, if I may. I'm sorry, I should have asked this prior. Before we go into questions, Chair, Tammy Sanderson would like to make a statement.

**Chair:** Absolutely.

**Tammy Sanderson:** Thank you.

Good afternoon, MLAs. Thank you so much for having me here today and thank you to the people here to support me and watching me online.

My name is Tammy Sanderson and I'm a survivor of domestic violence. On July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024, I had enough strength and courage to walk into the RCMP in Charlottetown. From there, I was sent to the Major Crime Unit where I handed in my phone full of hundreds of pictures, videos, and messages of the horrific abuse my children and I were subjected to for three years.

On August 1<sup>st</sup> of 2024, the PEI Major Crime Unit found him and charged him with two counts of assault causing bodily harm, three counts of assault with a weapon, and one count of assault. This didn't even touch on the abuse my children and I have gone through over that period of time.

Some of these charges were me being beaten multiple times with broom handles, rakes, power drills. I had my bare skin whipped with cords. I

had my ribs broken twice. My face was burnt with cigarettes. One time he threw me to the ground and busted up my right knee. I needed stitches and staples to hold it back together. Thousands of dollars of damage to my home, my car, and my personal belongings – the list goes on.

Major Crimes told me he should be getting minimum five and a half years, and after 30-some court dates over the span of 14 months, he ended up getting 90 days of weekends, in which he did 42 days in total.

While I was sitting at home and traumatized by the system, while I was not allowed to get the therapy I truly needed because the court system is broken, I thought: How could I help the next person? I wasn't the first woman he had beaten, nor was I the second. He had a history of domestic violence.

I started reaching out to the services on PEI, or should I say the lack of? During the 14 months of waiting for the court system, I started reading the Criminal Code to understand what all this was, then PEI legislation, and then provincial legislation all across Canada.

I started cross-referencing what PEI was lacking and what other provinces had for domestic violence protocols. That is when I found Clare's Law. Clare's Law is named after a woman who died at the hands of her ex. She was burned to death in 2007 from an ex who had a history of violence.

From there, I contacted RCMP in those provinces in Canada who already had these protocols in place. I reached out to as many other groups and institutions, looking for as much information as I could to see how I could bring this law to PEI.

The numbers in 2024 for violence in PEI for children, women, and men are 1,380. Those numbers don't include a lot of people – the ones who are scared to come forth. Those are high numbers for our little province. I see a pattern which needs to be fixed. There are no support groups here on PEI for domestic violence. The system has failed me like so many others.

By passing the bill, it would give another person a chance – a chance to sit down with the RCMP and have the right to ask and the right to know. This will save lives. It will allow the person to be able to get the dire information for their

safety before and during their relationship. It will minimize the impact on the persons. It will minimize our tired systems we have on Prince Edward Island: RCMP, police, child protection, doctors, mental health – the list goes on where those services are already impacted enough.

[2:40 p.m.]

I can't change my past or what happened to my children and I, but I want to change someone else's future. It is up to you to pass the bill. Save the next child, woman, or man before they get into something that is sometimes so hard to get out of.

Thank you for listening to me today.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

**K. Bernard:** Thank you, Chair.

I just want to start by thanking Tammy for sharing your story. It's very powerful and explains very well the future impacts of this bill, which are incredible.

I want to thank the mover for bringing this forward. When we went in for our briefing, I had mentioned to the member that it was something that I had tried to bring forward a couple of times, but at the time, there were no jurisdictions that had it fully in place and had it figured out.

The issue was the difference in jurisdiction between municipal city police and RCMP, because municipal city police are governed by provincial law where RCMP are governed by the federal *Privacy Act*. So, in rural areas, there was a gap in service because RCMP weren't able to do that because they're not allowed to release information without consent. In some jurisdictions, the city tried to take it, but just with the load of work that it was, they were hesitant to do that.

I know that for the most part, that's been worked out. Did you hear any concerns along that line from the RCMP that you consulted with?

**C. Simpson:** Thank you for the question.

Because there are three jurisdictions now in operation, when the scan was done across, we

did learn what other jurisdictions had done across the country.

The feedback that we received from police services was that they actually supported the bill and that they would do what was necessary behind the scenes and once it moves to regulations, if you will, to take a look at how they manage that and how they manage for unintended consequences.

Of course, our own *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* does cover that, except for in Kensington where the police service is not recognized as a municipality. There's a clause within the act that would cover off the protection of personal information, and that's why that's in there.

So, yes, that has been addressed. That was something that was also brought to us by the Privacy Commissioner to pay very close attention to, and we believe we've done so. But I'll just double-check to see if I've missed anything.

**Madison Ranta:** The only thing I would add to that is just – I would direct to... Our intentions in including clause 8 in the draft bill around the prohibitions as you indicated around the RCMP would be subject to federal privacy legislation.

We understand that with FOIPP, there may be some irregularities around how Kensington is considered as a designated municipality, with respect to that act or not. Our intention with including clause 8 is to try to be that catch-all prohibition or regulatory clause to make sure, whether it's under provincial legislation or otherwise, that it would be covered.

**K. Bernard:** I think it's great because other jurisdictions now have had the opportunity to work out those kinks. I bet you when local police authorities hear about it, they probably like that too because it gives them a tool to help protect people, because they're the ones going to these calls and seeing people who are living through these horrific situations.

The only concern I have with this bill is that there's no commencement clause. We've seen many bills go through here with good intentions and pass unanimously and then never proclaimed, and I don't want it to happen with this bill.

Saskatchewan was 19 months; Manitoba was almost four years; Alberta, 17 months; and Newfoundland, almost four years. I don't know if you have a sense of why it took Manitoba and Newfoundland so long. Was it a lack of political will? Were there different things they were working out? Did you find any of that in your work?

**C. Simpson:** Thank you. I'll refer this over to the person who did the research behind it.

**Madison Ranta:** Sure. When we were looking at – sorry, that was with respect to the commencement clause. In doing our jurisdictional scan, as you mentioned, some other jurisdictions had taken significantly longer than others to try and implement this.

[2:45 p.m.]

Our understanding is that it was around... The devil is in the details, if you will. There's been a lot of – whether it's different jurisdictions of police in those provinces or other issues to be sorted out. Our understanding is that it was – I'm not sure if it was political will related, or more so related to ensuring that the regulations were in place to make the legislation operational.

**C. Simpson:** To that point, some may look at the act and see that there may be potential vagueness within such, but to your point, the devil is in the detail. We worked to have the act as fulsome as it needed to be to get to the place where, at the end of the day, the department responsible who's taking charge of the regulations can do so with the regulations and subsequent policies to meet the needs for PEI as well. Police services even shared with us copies of application forms and such. They were ahead of us from that side of things.

But to put something like that level of detail inside the bill, you can imagine what it would take if we needed to change it down the road, where within regulations and at the department level, it can be managed much more effectively.

**K. Bernard:** I can appreciate that. I guess just a comment, and then I don't think I have any more questions, but I really, really hope – I don't imagine this not passing here today. I can't imagine why this wouldn't. I guess I'll leave it in the hands of the Department of Justice to ensure that this gets rolled out quickly because, as was mentioned by Tammy, this will save

lives. It absolutely will. To dilly-dally with this is to dilly-dally with people's lives.

I just want to thank you once again for bringing it forward.

**Chair:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I want to thank the promoter for bringing this very important bill forward. I also want to thank Tammy for sharing her personal story, and for her advocacy and for making a difference in someone else's life in the future. It takes a very strong person to step forward, tell their story, and take action. So, good for her.

Promoter, I wonder if you could just take me through an example of what would happen if someone applies and they are determined to meet the criteria. What would happen then?

**C. Simpson:** Once application is made and police services determine that they can go forward, what would happen would be a release of a risk assessment level still to be determined and the detail around what that could or would look like, and with that, either no risk up to, yes, extreme risk.

Then there would be supports offered to that individual, in terms of the higher the risk, then these are the sorts of supports that are available to them, with the intent, as police services do today – their concern is for the safety of people, and they would continue to do so.

It will not be written to the person. It would be a verbal communication. The individual would be asked as well to sign the term, an undertaking, to not use the information for any other purpose than their own personal use. There would be consequences for that individual if they chose to do otherwise.

**Hon. H. Perry:** What would happen if someone applied and they didn't meet the criteria? What would happen then?

**C. Simpson:** That's a great question, member.

What would happen there is that obviously the police services would explain to the individual placing the application why their application was turned down at that point in time. Again, this act gives the authority to police services to determine, through the regulations and in

working with the department, what those criteria and benchmarks would be, although we lay out in here the definition of a person who can make application. Then, that would be the end of it, member.

However, it doesn't stop an individual from then coming back at a later point in time. That same individual could make a subsequent request to police services.

Did I leave anything out?

**Madison Ranta:** I don't think so. That's fulsome.

[2:50 p.m.]

**Hon. H. Perry:** In drafting this bill, same question we ask all the time – consultation with stakeholders. Who did you consult during the process?

**C. Simpson:** We have the list with us. There were 18 emails sent out for consultation. We heard back in written form from the majority. There were a handful who did not reply, and that's their call. Then we had several who requested individual meetings which we did do.

I'll ask Madison to read the list for you.

**Madison Ranta:** Sure. In terms of groups that we heard written feedback from, we received comments back from BIPOC USHR, the PEI Chiefs of Police association – so, for RCMP, Summerside, Kensington, and Charlottetown. We also received written feedback from PEERS Alliance, the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women, PEI Family Violence Prevention Services, the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre.

All of those organizations provided us with written feedback with respect to the bill, and then in terms of in-person meetings that we had with stakeholders, we had the opportunity to meet with the Information and Privacy Commissioner for Prince Edward Island, in addition to a meeting with representatives from the Native Council of Prince Edward Island. We also had the opportunity to have a meeting with the deputy minister and representatives from the Department of Justice, as well, to discuss.

**Hon. H. Perry:** Perfect. Thank you.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Seniors.

**Hon. B. Ramsay:** Thank you, Member.

Tammy, thank you so much for coming in to share your story. I know that's very difficult, and I really appreciate it.

Violence against women is a serious and widespread issue that affects individuals, family, and communities across all regions and backgrounds. It is not only a personal tragedy; it is a public health, social, and economic issue with long-lasting impacts. No one should live in fear in their home, workplace, or community. Everyone has the right to safety, dignity, and respect.

Violence against women can take many forms including physical, sexual, emotional, financial, and online abuse. The impacts of violence extends beyond survivors, affecting children, families, workplaces, and community. We need to do all that we can to prevent this from happening in our homes and communities across the province. So, I commend the hon. member for the efforts to prevent domestic violence. Thank you for that. I do support this legislation moving forward to help prevent domestic violence.

I just have a few questions on that. The Leader of the Opposition asked one, and it was: Who was consulted? You gave a list, and thank you for that. Were they all positive? Was the feedback positive from everybody that you mentioned?

**C. Simpson:** That's a great question, member. Thank you.

Yes, positive from the point of view that everybody that provided the feedback – there were only a few that chose not to – overwhelmingly were in support of this. Then there would be caveats of "Have you considered this?" or "Have you considered that?" So, questions came forward from participants as well, and again through meeting with the Attorney General's office as well. Great questions there that posed good thoughts.

Based on the wholesome and complete feedback that we received, we were able to make the appropriate adjustments to the bill that's before you today.

But overwhelmingly, there was nobody who said this is not a good idea.

**Hon. B. Ramsay:** Thank you for that. My concern is that we pass this bill, but we want to do it right. There have been a few bills that have passed over the years that I'm like, how did that ever get through, you know? So, we just want to make sure that this is right. I'm happy to work with the Minister of Justice to move this bill forward.

Thank you very much, member.

**C. Simpson:** Thank you.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

**S. Dillon:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[2:55 p.m.]

I, too, am supportive of the bill. I also hoped that maybe this might come forward at some point. I realize it's not necessarily going to end inter-partner violence or domestic violence within our communities, but it is a tool to support those who find themselves in situations that they need support or help. I do have a couple of questions.

I tried to write down exactly who it was that you had said. Would you mind saying who it was that didn't get back to you? I'm just curious as to some of the ones that are in my head that I think of.

**Madison Ranta:** Sure. Just in terms of groups we had contacted: the Aboriginal Women's Association, Black Cultural Society of PEI, Blooming House Women's Shelter, East Prince Women's Info Centre, Chief Bernard and Chief Gould, IRSA, the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island, and Winter Street men's shelter were a few others that we had reached out to.

**S. Dillon:** I wonder why they didn't get back to you but, regardless, they had the opportunity. I wondered if you had given any opportunity to an open public consultation where people might be able to come. Maybe that's not something that you even considered or would want to have considered.

**C. Simpson:** Great question, member.

We did ponder the best way forward to do this, recognizing that when Tammy brought this to us, to be honest with you, I felt the sense of: What can we do to get the most solid bill – as the member has suggested we need to do, and rightly so – to this floor? Who are the people that we absolutely need to talk to? Let's get out there.

During each of those consultations that either people responded to and the people that came to us, we asked the question: Who else do we need to go to ensure we've had the opportunity to speak with so that no group or persons were left out? Based on that fulsome list, we felt confident that public consultation would not likely have garnered anything further than we already were able to ascertain.

**S. Dillon:** One of the concerns that was brought forward when I may have inquired about this bill as well was that our policing services on Prince Edward Island don't share the same system.

The RCMP and I believe the Summerside Police use a system called PROS, and the Charlottetown police services use something different. My nervousness is that we pass legislation that people feel that they can access and they may not be able to if they aren't in the right jurisdiction.

I give the example of if somebody lived in Charlottetown and may have found themselves in a situation where the Charlottetown city police were the ones to have dealt with it and they move to another area in the province that maybe the RCMP deal with that if someone was to apply for that information, they wouldn't be able to see on Charlottetown's system if that person had actually been involved in a domestic situation.

**C. Simpson:** That is an excellent question and one that we were actually worried about ourselves: What would happen jurisdictionally?

The police services response back to us was positive from the perspective, this is how we can make this work. We did not get into the detail of – if I lived in Charlottetown and the potential for Madison, who is my new partner, lived in another area – how those two police services would work together.

However, back to when regulations are being developed, that is something that duly needs to be heard and how do we make that happen so

that we ensure that the messaging that the person receives on their risk assessment does indeed cover all aspects of policing services across PEI?

We'll take note to that and when and if this bill is successful in passing, that we will be working – and I've offered that – to work with the department on any regulations that would come from this. I see that we could deal with that at regulatory time.

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

[3:00 p.m.]

**M. MacFarlane:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, member, for bringing this important bill forward.

My question surrounds the definition of intimate partner violence, which, of course, as we know, can take many forms. It's important that we define the subject matter of the legislation correctly. My question is where the definition came from, because it's not exactly like others that we came across when we did our own scan on this, both either within our province or across jurisdictionally.

**Madison Ranta:** In using that definition of intimate partner violence, working with the legislative drafter, our intent was to make it a broader term, understanding that Prince Edward Island currently has the *Victims of Family Violence Act*. We were looking, with this, to have a broader application with the goal of hopefully trying to prevent some kind of criminality or further escalation of harm from getting to that point.

In drafting that definition for intimate partner violence, we had looked at definitions in the legislation that I think New Brunswick and Manitoba, as well as some of the other provinces, that the working title we've given to this bill – *Disclosure to Protect to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act* – is the same title of the legislation that's in Manitoba or in New Brunswick. So, recognizing that it's a bit different but also trying to keep it broad to cover what we hope to achieve with this bill.

**M. MacFarlane:** Thank you for that, Madison.

Is it fair to say that it's a customized definition based on your work, your review, to suit what you feel our province is best served by?

**Madison Ranta:** Yes.

**M. MacFarlane:** That's fine.

Thanks, Chair.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Artificial Intelligence – that's quite the handle.

**Hon. J. Redmond:** Thank you very much, Chair.

I just have a couple of questions. One thing that I'm trying to think about is the wraparound support services that will go with this bill. I'm assuming Victim Services would be a part of that, because I think there's probably a great deal of courage, for one, but a great deal of fear – as mentioned by your stranger, Ms. Sanderson – when somebody even goes in to ask: Is this individual a concern?

Maybe this is probably in the weeds – would there be wraparound services for them...? For two sides, (1) it comes back and identifies something very scary, or (2) also very scary, when something doesn't show up and you have that spidey sense that this isn't right.

**C. Simpson:** Thank you, member. That's an excellent question.

What police services said they would do today, if I were to go in off the street to say I was concerned about my partner, Madison, they have no means right now to offer me any support but would certainly ask questions: Do you feel safe? Where can you go? Those sorts of things.

That would continue, only this formalizes a means by which – these shelters exist for you, this level of support exists for you, there is Victim Services, the myriad of supports that would be made available should there be a risk assessment that states that it's needed.

The opposite is true. There are spidey senses in there, and they're saying, okay, my risk assessment is low. Police services would do their job, and I am quite confident – and again, we'd be asking: "How are you doing, Carolyn? Clearly, you aren't feeling safe. There is nothing in the risk assessment." It's up to me as the applicant to make the decision on what I'm going to do next for myself. I'd have to take ownership of that.

You're right: if I'm asking the question, I have a spidey sense to begin with.

Does that answer your question?

**Hon. J. Redmond:** That does. Thank you, yes.

I have two more. My other question, too – again, this might be too into the weeds of this – is that if I'm going in and I'm asking this, there's no way for that information to get back to the individual that is being questioned about.

**C. Simpson:** That's an excellent question. That was one of the unintended consequences that we want to ensure that the individual making application is safe.

[3:05 p.m.]

Police services will certainly have the authority or autonomy or ability – whatever word you'd like to use – to say you won't have to come into the precinct. Perhaps there's an online application. Maybe we could meet at another place.

**Hon. J. Redmond:** Okay. Is it possible in this bill so that family members or friends could place the application for an individual? I still go back to someone – it takes a lot of courage and grace to be able to do that, and if they're feeling scared, maybe a family member recognizes that. How do they help, or is there a way to help? Does it have to be that particular individual with Clare's Law?

**C. Simpson:** Another excellent question.

We don't completely cover off someone who is incredibly nervous about putting in an application. The act would state that I would need to do so unless I'm underage, and then there is a designated person who could act on my behalf, or I'm an individual who is unable to.

So, perhaps I'm an individual living with a disability and I am entering into an intimate partner relationship, but I lack the confidence to be able to do that for myself and have an advocate in other parts of my life. That individual would be able to use a designated person to support them in their application and to make application on their behalf, but not the person who's just afraid to do so. It's a limitation. Does that answer your question?

**Hon. J. Redmond:** Thank you. Perfect.

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

**Hon. B. Thompson:** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Sanderson, for your statement, and I want to thank the member for bringing this. I do have questions and I think this discussion is important. I assume you guys wanted to get it to a vote today, so Chair, do I have time to...?

**Chair:** Ask away.

**Hon. B. Thompson:** Okay. Thank you.

Thank you for bringing this. I do want to point out the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park did discuss this in the past, and so did Charlottetown-Belvedere, to great lengths, and you met with my deputy minister. He's quite capable, isn't he?

**C. Simpson:** He's (Indistinct)

**Hon. B. Thompson:** I just wanted to get that on the record again. [Laughter]

[Interjection]

**Hon. B. Thompson:** He informed me on this. He said you had had a great conversation. Of course, they have concerns, which they have to.

**C. Simpson:** Absolutely.

**Hon. B. Thompson:** They have to have concerns because when I talked to Victim Services, the false feeling of safety is what really bothers Jayelee. So, to get this right, I appreciate, actually, you not putting a proc. clause in there because, I'm going to be honest and very frank with you, this is going to take resources and money.

**C. Simpson:** And time.

**Hon. B. Thompson:** And time. The resources and money, we can find. The time is somewhat out of my control, but I want to get it right.

**C. Simpson:** And this is a start.

[Interjections]

**C. Simpson:** We're out having a coffee now. [Laughter] It's a start.

**Hon. B. Thompson:** Well, we're having a conversation. I am going to support this whether my department wants it or not because I think it's important. It's just time. We've got to find those resources to get this on.

The concerns – did you make any changes in the legislation that they recommended?

**C. Simpson:** Yes.

**Madison Ranta:** We did receive some helpful feedback from the department. Some of it was around some of the definitions in the legislation that we took their comments into advisement on. A lot of the comments, which I do appreciate from Victim Services and from the department, are around not equating no information on a risk assessment with necessarily meaning that there is no risk at all.

[3:10 p.m.]

We're trying to ensure that this is seen as just another tool and not the only answer or the definitive answer.

Another comment that we had heard led us to the inclusion of section 8 in the bill around the prohibition clause there, just when it was brought to our attention by the department to avoid any potential gaps with the application of this legislation to the Kensington police service, including that general prohibition clause there to make sure that whether it's federal legislation, provincial legislation, or in general, the protection of people's private information is protected as much as possible.

**Hon. B. Thompson:** Thank you for that.

You mentioned the police services. That is probably going to be our largest challenge. We have four police agencies pretty much aligned, but not perfectly aligned yet, and that sharing of information is key. This is the most important thing, the sharing of information, and to get it right. You don't want to go to one agency and get the right answer and...

**C. Simpson:** Something different somewhere else.

**Hon. B. Thompson:** That is the biggest concern. I know that's some of the reason why New Brunswick – it's taking time to get theirs proclaimed. I don't want to take that much time, but again, I can't guarantee that. But this is

important legislation and it's something that we've got to move forward on.

Domestic violence is something that no matter what we do, it's a part of our society. I really wish we could have that magic wand, but this, like you say, is a tool, along with our domestic violence court, which is making great strides. I want to give that part of our department kudos for getting that done.

I guess that's all I have to say. Thank you for bringing this. I don't know if there are any other questions, but I will – to see it go to....

**C. Simpson:** May I just, Chair, make a comment?

**Chair:** Yeah, certainly.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

**C. Simpson:** Thank you.

I would just like to echo – when we met with your deputy minister and team, the time that they took with us and the information that they shared with us was second to none, and respect the fact that to get it right will take time and resources. We're not naïve to that, either, but we have to start somewhere.

**Hon. B. Thompson:** Yeah, I appreciate that.

**C. Simpson:** Thank you.

**Chair:** Are there any more questions before we vote on the bill?

One final question. The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

**S. Dillon:** First of all, I never even got to say thank you for bringing this forward, and thank you, Tammy, for having the courage to come here today and share your story. It's not easy. So, thank you.

My last question: I wonder, just for those people watching online – I'm not sure if there is anybody, but if there are – if you could just talk a little bit about the process of the refusal of an application. So, applications – just not everybody that goes to apply is necessarily going to be granted this information. There is a process to go through. What does that look like?

**C. Simpson:** Thank you for acknowledging that there are people watching online. Tammy has a support system, a large support system that couldn't be here physically but are sitting at their homes and maybe their offices watching, as well as people here in the gallery to support.

That is a great question. In essence, the process would be that the applicant would submit application, still to be determined process in terms of what that looks like and the content, although we've been provided some examples but that's regulatory.

Police services would do their due diligence and then would respond back to the person that – well, depending if they have a sense from the applicant that the applicant is, for lack of a better word, not authentic, in that they are not actually in an intimate partner relationship with this other individual and/or are fishing just for the sake of fishing. We'd hate to think that that happens in our world, but the risk is there that somebody is just really being inappropriate and looking for gossip, if you will.

[3:15 p.m.]

The intent is to have the questions geared in such a way that you're not going to be able to fake your way through it. You will need to be able to demonstrate that you are in this intimate partner relationship.

From there, police services – again, doing their due diligence – would make that determination and then act accordingly afterward. If it's deemed that you don't meet that criteria, they will tell you that and that will be the end of it.

**S. Dillon:** Chair, can I just have one final comment? And then I'm done. I promise.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

**S. Dillon:** I can't close without saying that I think I think our law enforcement will do a great job at making sure that those who need the information get the information, and those that don't, receive that as well. I'll put in a plug to our law enforcement.

**C. Simpson:** Thank you.

**Chair:** Shall the bill carry? Carried.

**C. Simpson:** Thank you.

I move the title.

**Chair:** *Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

**C. Simpson:** I move the enactment 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.

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

**Chair:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**C. Simpson:** Thank you.

[Hear, hear!]

[Hon. B. Trivers in the chair]

**M. MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence 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?

Recorded division has been requested, members.

I ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to ring the bell.

[The bells were rung]

**R. Henderson:** The opposition members are ready for the vote.

**K. Bernard:** The third party is ready for the vote.

**T. DesRoches:** Government is ready for the vote, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Alright, we will proceed with the vote.

All those voting against the report of the committee, please rise.

Just for the record, that was zero.

All those supporting and voting for the report of the committee, please stand.

[3:20 p.m.]

[The Clerk calls the roll]

YEAS

Bell  
Bernard  
Bevan-Baker  
BurrIDGE  
Compton  
Croucher  
Curran  
Deagle  
DesRoches  
Dillon  
Dollar  
Henderson  
Hudson  
Lantz  
MacEwen  
MacFarlane  
MacKay  
MacLennan  
McNeilly  
Perry  
Ramsay  
Redmond  
Simpson  
Thompson

**Speaker:** Hon. members, the report from the committee, and therefore, the bill, has passed unanimously.

[Applause]

Motions Other Than Government

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

**M. MacFarlane:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, that the same be now received and read a first time.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Clerk:** Bill No. 106, *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*, read a first time.

**Speaker:** Hon. member, would you like to add some description to that bill?

**M. MacFarlane:** Sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The bill seeks to amend section 22.2 of the *Employment Standards Act* as that section pertains to the requirement for medical certificates, commonly known as sick notes, such that the amendment would prohibit an employer from requiring medical certificates to be provided in support of sick leave pursuant to the provisions of that section.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that Motion No. 16 be now read.

**Clerk:** Motion No. 16: Establishing a satellite menopause centre on PEI.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park moves, seconded by the hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point, the following motion:

**WHEREAS** perimenopause and menopause impact 51% of the population;

**AND WHEREAS** unmanaged perimenopause and menopause symptoms cost the Canadian economy approximately \$3.5 billion annually, including \$3.3 billion in lost income for women due to reduced hours or leaving the workforce as well as \$237 million in lost productivity for employers;

**AND WHEREAS** perimenopause is the transitional, often four-to-ten-year period before menopause, marked by irregular periods and hormonal fluctuations that cause a range of symptoms and menopause is the milestone defined as 12 consecutive months without a menstrual period;

**AND WHEREAS** the IWK Atlantic Canadian Women's Health survey results found that women have clearly indicated that menopause is a top health priority, and there is demand for better access to menopause care and information;

**AND WHEREAS** Nova Scotia is in the first phase of rolling out Canada's first Menopause

Centre of Excellence which is being led by their Department of Health and Wellness in partnership with the Menopause Society of Nova Scotia, IWK Health and Nova Scotia Health;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that this Legislative Assembly urge government to work with the stakeholders in Nova Scotia to create a satellite Menopause Centre on PEI;

**THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this Legislative Assembly urge government to work with local general practitioners, registered nurses, pelvic floor physiotherapists, dietitians and gynecologists, as well as the SHORS clinic, IWK, Nova Scotia Health and their counterparts at the Department of Health and Wellness in Nova Scotia to deliver this program effectively to Islanders.

**Speaker:** I'd like to call upon the mover of the motion, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

**K. Bernard:** Thank you.

Dehydrated fascia, lymph drainage, fasting, cortisol, colostrum, creatine, magnesium, hormone replacement therapy, pelvic floor health, vitamin D, calcium, omega 3, vitamin E, iron, menopause weight gain, menopause diets, estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, protein – these are the things I lie awake in bed thinking about on my zero to six times waking up per night schedule.

[3:25 p.m.]

I lay there thinking, “Oh my god, is my fascia dehydrated? How would I know? If I wanted to hydrate it, how would I go about that? There's no point in exercising and stretching my fascia if it's dehydrated. Am I wasting my time exercising? Wait, what is a fascia? If it was dehydrated, how would I know, and what would I do to drain it? I'm puffy. My face is puffy. My legs are puffy. My eyes are disappearing. Maybe I need to get my lymph drained. How do I do that? Who do I talk to? How much does it cost? Wait, what is a lymph?”

All these things are coming at me on social media at speeds in which you wouldn't believe. I know I'm not alone because every woman in my age bracket is getting it, literally flying in your fact. It's called the menopause manifesto and any women in this room would know and agree that it's just coming at you.

The lack of support, the lack of research, the lack of knowledge in health care professionals due to this lack of research is leading to a huge gap for people where businesses, companies can just swoop in with the latest new and improved gadget that is guaranteed to help. It's so expensive.

Who knows if they work? There's no way to know if they work but you're so desperate with various symptoms, which – hot flashes, sleep disruptions, insomnia, itchy ears, restless legs, brain fog nights, sweats, mood swings, weight gain, low libido, fatigue, irregular, unpredictable periods, urinary issues, physical changes, exhaustion – welcome to your late 30s and 40s, ladies. I was not prepared for this; I know I'm not alone.

It's very evident in the fact that everywhere I go, quite literally – I kind of have this thing in my life where people just tell me their whole life stories. I don't them and it doesn't take long for them to jump in and tell me some of their deepest, darkest secrets. I think that is a gift that I have. I appreciate that. I love when people are comfortable enough to do that. I think that's probably what makes me a good counsellor and got me into counselling in the first place.

If you think of all of these symptoms and more impacts 51 percent of the population, and the worst part is there's no one fix-all remedy for any of these things. You treat each thing individually. How do you know what to treat? How do you know what you need? How do you know you're getting enough? How do you know you're doing the right thing?

I'm going to talk a little bit about the IWK Atlantic Canadian Women's Health Survey which I tabled in here earlier today. I noticed some of the members in the House have that right now. They were looking – I've said this number so many times and now I can't remember it – but their goal was, I think, like 2,000 respondents and they got 2,261 respondents from PEI alone. There were, I think, well over 13,000 people who responded to this survey.

I'm just going to go quickly through the booklet because it paints a very accurate picture of what is happening. What I will say quite confidently in here today is that the women in your life are not okay. We come into work every day. We do our thing. Most us, sometimes as much as we can, have a smile on our face. But you can be

guaranteed that we have many moments on our own where we're not okay.

Let's just take a moment to think about all of the women in our lives, in particular women in care-taking roles, which tend to be a lot. When you've got all of these things happening in your life, no wonder you're overwhelmed and stressed. I've always had a limited amount of anxiety but now it's through the roof all the time. I think it's just layering, layering, layering, layering all of these things.

And, so, as I went through – oh, sorry, I made a mistake if you can believe that. The overall responses were 27,317, not 13,000. Women wanted to talk about their health obviously.

Just going through some of the stats just really quickly, because they're quite alarming; I won't go into too much. But over 78 percent of women admitted to delaying or avoiding care altogether; 60 percent of women reported downplaying their health concerns; 76 percent carefully consider which symptoms are worth mentioning.

I can say, since I hit my 40s – and fortunate enough to have a family doctor; thank you, Dr. King – I keep a list of ongoing things for doctor's appointments, things that just pop up. I know I can only talk about so many things at each appointment. I prioritize what it is I want to talk about, which is really hard because sometimes it's hard to prioritize which things are more pressing.

Fifty percent of women worry about not being heard when discussing their health with their doctor; 50 pc delay seeking care because they have other responsibilities; and 38 percent put off seeking health care because they're too busy. Those are alarming.

[3:30 p.m.]

The most common health concerns that were mentioned in here were not acute illnesses but chronic and often invisible issues like stress, anxiety, sleep disruptions, hormonal imbalances, and physical-emotional toll of caregiving.

The survey makes clear that women's health is shaped by more than clinical symptoms. Social pressures, caregiving roles, financial strain, and knowledge gaps all converge to create invisible barriers to wellness. In this report, it identifies that 50 percent of women who took this survey

are caregivers for others, which adds on to the stress.

I don't know what it is. As someone who, in my home – you have the stereotypical women's roles. I've worked really hard my whole life to break those, both for myself and for my kids so that my daughter didn't think that she was the one that had to go to work every morning and think, "Okay, what am I going to have for supper? I don't have parmesan cheese, and I don't have onions, so after work, I'll – oh, no, I can't stop at the grocery store after work because I have a meeting. Okay, so I'll go to the meeting and then I'll run to the grocery store. We'll eat at like, nine o'clock tonight." Your head's just going constantly, not to mention the fact that you need to sit and be present in your job every day.

When you think about your home life, it's like – and I know I'm generalizing here because I have a great husband who does help me a lot. "Help me" – see? It's even in my language, like it is my responsibility to do that stuff, but it's not. Eighty percent of women say that their health affects their homelife, and I would agree with that. Sixty-seven percent say their work life is impacted.

This report is fascinating. Does anyone want to guess what the number one women's health issue that they want prioritized, not just in PEI but in the Maritimes – can anyone guess?

[Interjections]

**K. Bernard:** [Laughter] Well, their husbands aren't considered a health issue. They're considered something else; we won't get into that right now.

Of course, menopause/perimenopause is the number one thing that women on the Island and women around the Maritimes want prioritized. That is nothing to sneeze at.

When I started, I've had itchy ears now – and I'm talking not just slightly itchy ears; it's like digging in the Q-tip and you're shaking your leg because you're like, "Oh yeah." But it doesn't get the itch. It's like there's a spider crawling around in my ear almost all the time. It's been happening now for probably ten years. I went and talked to my doctor, and he's like, "Oh, I'm not sure what that is. Maybe put some oil in your ears." So, I do all these things; nothing works.

Turns out, guess what? It's a symptom of perimenopause.

All of these things are – how would you know? If you weren't trained in that as a health care professional, how would you know? They're so random and strange, how would you know?

I went to my doctor, because my girlfriends and I talk about this all the time. I talk about it with random strangers literally everywhere that I go, and I love that – dentist's office, grocery store waiting in line. Literally everywhere, women want to talk about this, and sometimes the men, too; that's fun.

I went to my doctor. I said, "Okay, I'm connecting a lot of dots here and I think I'm going through perimenopause, based on what I'm experiencing." He said, "Okay, well, we can send you for a blood test to confirm that," which, really, what's the point of a blood test? When you know, you know.

But anyway, I went for the blood test. He was fantastic. He said, "Karla, I want to be really honest with you. In medical school, we didn't learn about perimenopause/menopause. In fact, we didn't really learn about any things about women's health in particular, other than a little paragraph in one of our books. I'm trying to learn, but the best advice I can give you is look at each one of your symptoms, talk to your girlfriends. Talk to your girlfriends." So, I continued doing that.

He also told me about hormone replacement therapy, which I'd already known, and to assure me that the bad rap it got back a few years ago is no longer the case and that hormone replacement therapy is a wonderful tool.

Unmanaged perimenopause and menopause symptoms cost the Canadian economy approximately \$3.5 billion annually, including \$3.3 billion in lost income for women due to reduced hours or leaving the workforce, as well as \$237 million in lost productivity for employers. That is wild.

[3:35 p.m.]

It got me thinking. When I was thinking about this motion, I was thinking about education tools for government to talk about perimenopause/menopause. I know that the Interministerial Women's Secretariat came out with a booklet, *Perimenopause and You*. I

encourage, if ministers haven't done so already, to make sure that you have some of those at all of your different workplaces so that people can access them because one of the other biggest things I learned is this isn't just a women's issue. When we talk about women's health, we talk about everybody's health, so it's really important that the men in our lives see it as that.

We know that one in ten women end up leaving the workforce in Canada because of menopause symptoms that are not managed or accommodated for in their workplace, because some people go through things that would be quite embarrassing to have to go through in public. If you want to talk to me later – I just probably won't mention them in here because they are embarrassing, but come see me after and we can talk.

I guess when I look to what Nova Scotia is doing – Nova Scotia is becoming Canada's first Menopause Centre of Excellence. I reached out to one of my personal heroes, Jennifer Gillivan. She's the president and CEO of the IWK Foundation. I reached out to her to let her know this was coming forward, and she said that PEI has the opportunity to lead the country in this. Despite the fact that Nova Scotia is going to have the Centre for Excellence, PEI could lead the charge with research, could lead the charge by: What does it look like to have that satellite in PEI?

I'm going to miss somebody on my list, but I want to thank some people who are working tirelessly in this area, one of whom is Dr. Kathie McNally here in PEI. She hosted an event on the voice of PEI women at the Holman Grand. I know there were members from all parties there, and we had the opportunity to go and learn and hear, and I think one of the things that I just can't get out of my head is the fact that less than 2.7 percent of bioscience companies who are funded to do this work are led by women.

We've got bioscience companies led by women who want to take on these things, and who knows a woman's body better than a woman? I'm sorry. I know I mentioned in here before that they practice post-birth stitching on sponges from the dollar store, and I can tell you: it's not spongy. That came from, I'm guessing, a man's mind, that that might be a good substitute. Anyway, I just think it's important that we make sure that these companies that we're funding are led by women.

I want to thank Dr. Kathie McNally, Leeanne Yeo – she hosts *The M Factor*; she’s hosted a couple of movie events that I haven’t had a chance to go to, with panels – and Paige Martin, a pelvic floor physiotherapist. I want to thank you for being such champions for women in PEI; Jennifer Gillivan and Heather Creighton from the IWK Foundation and all those involved in rolling out Canada’s first Menopause Centre of Excellence, the Department of Health and Wellness in Nova Scotia, the Menopause Society of Nova Scotia, IWK Health, and Nova Scotia Health. Also, Atlantic Summer Institute here in PEI has partnered with Leading Impact; they’ll be releasing a report specific to PEI women and perimenopause/menopause very shortly.

So, 65 percent of women currently feel that the system does not meet their needs. This is a collective appeal for substantial reform to better serve women’s health care needs. Given that menopause, hormonal health, and perimenopause is the top issue women in PEI want prioritized, this is a huge opportunity to jump off the work being done in Nova Scotia, a great opportunity to support women and not have to re-invent the wheel, engaging all the people doing great work, including – I have to give a shout-out to Gender Affirming Care PEI.

Their funding from government keeps dropping. Their funding that they got last year that was only supposed to last them six months – \$40,000 – they have to stretch that \$40,000 out over 12 months this year. So, I’d like to thank Gender Affirming Care PEI, SHORS – meaning the women’s health clinic – local general practitioners, registered nurses, pelvic floor physiotherapists, dietitians, gynecologists....

[3:40 p.m.]

When I sent Jennifer Gillivan from IWK an email telling her that I was bringing this forward today, she sent a very encouraging email. I’m just going to read this little bottom thing that she sent. She said:

“The facts are there. You can’t argue with facts. And the economic opportunity is there. So, it comes down to the will of government and the people who value the other 50 percent of our population and support systemic changes to women’s health and research.”

It wouldn’t be me if I’m talking about one of my heroes, Jennifer Gillivan, that I didn’t plug her

*Fifth Wave* podcast. I, again, will take the opportunity to say please listen to that. Not only does it dive into perimenopause and menopause, it dives into women’s health in general and some really cool things happening, and how we can really get behind supporting women’s research because women’s research is quite literally how we make gender equity a thing in the world.

I hope that we get unanimous support for this motion to make PEI a satellite site to partner with Nova Scotia to be part of Canada’s very first Menopause Centre of Excellence right here in little old PEI.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** I’ll call upon the seconder of the motion, the hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

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

I want to start out by thanking Charlottetown-Victoria Park. I just love listening to her speak about issues that she is so passionate about, and there are many of them.

I harken back to the time when Charlottetown-Victoria Park was one of five women in the Green caucus here, and so much good work and conversation happened in this House, which had never happened in the 180 preceding years because, I believe, there was a caucus dominated by women who felt that issues like menopause, like endometriosis, like pelvic floor health, like women’s health, like the right for women to make decisions about their own bodies – all of these things were discussed in this House in a manner that they had never been before.

So, it’s just lovely to see Charlottetown-Victoria Park bringing forward this motion as she fans herself in front of me. [Laughter]

Of course, I’m not qualified to speak on this at all. I rise today as a proud ally and a proud feminist seeking gender equality everywhere I can. I have spoken many times in this House on issues where I am striving to be a good ally, whether that be with the 2SLGBTQIA community or with the Indigenous community here or visible minorities – so many marginalized communities here. And although I may not be a part of that community, I stand beside them and behind them as we try and

create the most inclusive and equal societies that we possibly can.

Of course, communities have historically been dominated by males, by male presence. In many respects, we haven't done a really good job. I think it's a wonderful thing that we have a number of women, women in every caucus, represented in this Legislature today. I acknowledge absolutely fully my privilege as a cisgendered white male and all of the doors that were open to me, all of the possibilities that were available to me that are not yet available to everybody else.

I know that women generally have been discriminated against wherever you look, and have struggled, consequently, to have their needs and their very legitimate concerns brought forward, of course one of them being women's health – the so-called women's health gap. Charlottetown-Victoria Park talked about the scientific studies and the surveys which are so biased towards men and males. Partly because of that, we've been really slow to provide women with the sorts of health supports that they need and deserve.

[3:45 p.m.]

That's partly why I'm so glad that this IWK survey from February of this year has appeared, the voice of PEI women. As Charlottetown-Victoria Park mentioned, an enormous number of people responded to this – 27,000 regionally, over 2,000 women here on Prince Edward Island. Again, as Charlottetown-Victoria Park mentioned, the number one health issue that was brought forward in this study was not cancer, it was not weight control, it was not mental health concerns – it was menopause. It's an issue which clearly affects so many women, and yet, we have not got the resources, we have not got the support systems in place to make sure that women receive the care, the help, the supports that they need.

I'm not going to repeat any of the things, hopefully, that Charlottetown-Victoria Park said so eloquently and passionately in her remarks, and I want to give others plenty of time to respond to this, but from one of the pages in the report, this stood out to me. It was talking about the collective vision that they got from all of the 27,000 responses. It said:

“What emerges is the picture of a woman who feels stressed and anxious; who carries the

burden of care for those around her and who has self-censored her own health concerns due to a pattern of dismissal and bias. The challenge is not just medical, it is structural, societal, and systemic.”

I think that sums up why we need this satellite menopause clinic here on Prince Edward Island. I support, of course, this motion, absolutely. I look forward to others, both women and men in this Legislature, standing up in support both of the motion and speaking in favour of it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

As PEI Minister responsible for the Status of Women, I am working towards strengthening outcomes for women and girls across our province, and I look forward to collaborating with the Minister of Health and Wellness in my new role.

I would like to voice my support for the motion to establish a satellite menopause centre on PEI. The IWK women's health survey spoke loud and clear about health priorities of women in our province. We know that there has long been a missing focus on perimenopause and menopause, including gaps in access to care and information for women who need it.

I would like to note that the Interministerial Women's Secretariat provided funding last year through the IWS grant request for proposals to the Atlantic Summer Institute to lead a series of community conversations about menopause. A central goal of the project is to identify and articulate the specific policy blind spots that contribute to the challenges experienced by PEI women during perimenopause and menopause.

As a first step towards paving the way for systemic changes that enhance overall community health and social wellbeing, the PEI research aligned with the recent IWK women's health survey and report, where 27,000 Maritime women identified menopause and perimenopause support as one of the top priorities they addressed.

Early findings reinforce that menopause is far more than a health issue; it can shape women's ability to work, care for others, earn income, and

fully participate in community life. It is exciting to hear that our neighbours in Nova Scotia are working towards opening the country's first Menopause Centre of Excellence. I know they're in phase 1 as of February.

Creating a satellite clinic is one way to leverage the expertise and resources available within our region to more effectively deliver the health care that PEI women need and deserve. I am committed to working with the Minister of Health and Wellness to ensure that this is a continued priority placed on the health issue that matters most to women on PEI.

I'd like to take this opportunity to draw attention to the resource that was developed by the Interministerial Women's Secretariat. *Perimenopause, Menopause and You* is a recently updated publication that is available online and at various Health PEI sites across the province.

[3:50 p.m.]

The booklet makes it easy for women to access a broad range of resources and materials in one place, and includes various topics such as common symptoms, treatments, diet, and exercise. The booklet was developed in collaboration from a variety of organizations and individuals, including Health PEI, Public Health and Family Nutrition, SHORS, PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women, PEERS Alliance, and Women's Network of PEI.

If anyone here in the gallery – there's no one here – or watching online would like a copy, my office would be pleased to connect with you for this great resource, so please reach out.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will certainly support this motion.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

**S. Dillon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure I'll be quite as eloquent as the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, but I will do my best.

I, too, went to the evening that Dr. Kathie McNally put on, and it was very informative. We had the people from the IWK there giving us

all kinds of information on the book that was tabled by the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

I think one of the things that really stood out to me that night was the amount of funding and research that goes into women's health, and it stuck with me. I, of course, tell everybody I can, because I think it's incredible: out of 100 percent funding of research in health, only 7 percent goes to women's health – 7 percent. That's not very much when it comes to 100 percent of funding.

So, we have a little bit of a ways to go. As the Member from New Haven-Rocky Point has mentioned, we do have to do a little bit of work around this. I am happy to see that there as many women that are elected into this Legislature to help push this issue as we can.

I know I'm on the time, and so I'm going to try to talk as quickly as I can.

Perimenopause and menopause – we really didn't know much about it, but it certainly has come on board very quickly. Maybe it's because of my age and maybe it's because of my friends' ages, but we certainly have a number of conversations about it. And it doesn't matter where we go – we could be going out for supper; we could be doing a craft night – our conversation certainly centers around how we can support each other through this stage of our life.

It's incredible to realize some of the things that happen in a woman's body when they don't have enough estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone. Some of those things are bone density loss, early heart disease, and early dementia, as well as everyday things like anxiety, depression, muscle and joint pain, hot flashes, night sweats, sleep, itchy ears, and ringing ears.

I know the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park mentioned that she goes over a lot of things when she wakes up a number of times. I tend to write question sets when I can't sleep at four o'clock in the morning and I think, oh my goodness, what am I going to ask today? By the time I fall back asleep and wake up again, I forget what I was going to say – but again, another symptom of perimenopause and menopause is forgetting words, losing track, and not being able to concentrate like we once used to be able to do.

I believe that it's important that women's health is supported through all of the stages of women's health, right from when we're young through the time when we're in childbearing years – and I would be remiss to not put a plug in for fertility services because I feel like that is super important in women's health as well. We start as young children – a lot of us – wanting to be moms, and when that doesn't happen for us, it's devastating. So, I would be remiss to not say that those people/families that are trying to have babies are certainly part of the women's health continuum – which leads us into perimenopause and menopause – which should be supported all along the way.

I think when we talk about what happens to women in this stage of life, it's a vicious cycle. I'll go back to the sleep patterns; we don't sleep, and then the day rolls on, and we become anxious or unsettled, and then we go to bed, and we don't sleep again. That vicious cycle of not sleeping is really hard, not only on our bodies but also on our minds. I have learned that a big reason for this not sleeping is the lack of estrogen within our system.

[3:55 p.m.]

I am happy to say that there is more support for women out there. I think the SHORS clinic is doing a great job for those people who don't have a family doctor, like myself. I am on the list to be seen at the SHORS clinic, and I'm anxiously awaiting my turn to be able to go there and hopefully be part of the ability to get HRT, hormone replacement therapy, which hopefully will help with some of these menopause-type symptoms.

I know that we had a SHORS clinic in Summerside and we have one in Charlottetown, and in 2025 – I believe it was June – there was a SHORS clinic opened up in Montague, the Minister of Health's neck of the woods. I think that it's important that we put these services all across the Island so people can access them when they are ready to do so.

I won't take up much more time, other than to say I 100 percent – and if I could 150 percent support the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, I would. I am excited to hear that we have the ability to maybe work with Nova Scotia on their newly opened centre to bring more supports to women in our province who are in this stage of their life looking for support.

With that, I thank the member for bringing this motion forward, I support her in her efforts, and I will turn the floor over to someone else.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**C. Simpson:** Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park works really well, Mr. Speaker. [Laughter]

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park. Pardon me.

**C. Simpson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Knowledge is power. I want to tell you about a woman that I know very, very well. She's highly educated. She's capable. She has spent her career showing up fully for the people who are depending on her. Then, one day, slowly at first, the brain fog stepped in – slowly, but then continued – and then, all of a sudden, pieces of herself started to disappear, and she didn't even recognize who she was anymore.

First, the sleep. Lack of sleep, they say, happens only with infants. No, it happens as you begin a new process that we're learning about. The brain fog was almost unbearable, and her body felt like it belonged to someone else. It couldn't possibly be hers.

So, she goes to her doctor and she outlines her symptoms, hoping that the doctor would say, "Oh my goodness. This is what this is, and here's the help that we have for you." That was not to be.

That woman was me. My journey began in my very early 30s. Far too young, I was told, to be entering into perimenopause, and by late 30s, was in menopause – full-on menopause. Someday, the symptoms, if I wanted to tell you what that was like.... Not fun.

I was told that this could last 10 to 20-plus years of my life, and I thought, how do you ever cope in life with 10 to 20 years, day in, day out, not even recognizing who you are? How do you show up for the people that you care for and love? How do you explain who you are? Because all of a sudden, you don't even make sense to yourself anymore.

I'm standing here today because I know I'm not alone, because women of this Island deserve

much, much better than what I got. I do have to say, back in the day – because I’m no longer in my 30s – that women’s health – I know you’re shocked – we didn’t get the attention. We still really don’t, but I just have to believe it’s getting somewhat better. My doctor didn’t know what to do to help me.

I know I’m not alone, and I know I wasn’t alone then, and many of us suffered in silence. When I say suffered in silence, that is not an understatement because it becomes embarrassing to be able to explain the cravings, the lack of sleep, the tiredness, the grumpiness, and everything that goes along with it as just a female issue, but it’s not. It’s a health care issue, and it’s a health care crisis.

Perimenopause and menopause affect 51 percent of this population – well, directly. We could argue indirectly to the other 49 percent. This is not a niche issue. This is not a female or women’s issue. I have one minute. I will wind this up very quickly.

[4:00 p.m.]

I understand the need to move this forward. I fully support this motion. I thank you for the time, and probably have about 30 seconds, so I’m going to fill it in. It’s not fun to go through this. Women need the care they need, when they need it, with the answers, the supports, the medication – whatever it is that that woman needs to get through what they’re going through to the next phase of their life is an absolute necessity to the overall health and wellbeing of all of our citizens, 51 percent and growing, potentially.

To have such a support here on PEI to help, it’s a beginning if we partner with our colleagues in Nova Scotia. It’s a great motion to bring forward. It’s a beginning of something that’s missing for us and something that we need.

With that, I will end my comments. I am proud to support this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Seeing as I have no one else on my list, I’ll go back to the mover to close debate.

**K. Bernard:** I hated rushing this motion because I want anyone to have the time to speak to this, but anyway, I just want to thank everyone who did speak to the motion. To those

who didn’t, let’s talk about it out there. I know I don’t like to stop people because women especially don’t get the chance to talk about it, so when you’re given the opportunity to do that – I wish that we had a few more minutes.

Anyway, I just want to thank everyone for their strong support and their words. I look forward to the vote.

**Speaker:** Thank you, member.

Alright, I’d like to call for the vote.

Those voting against the motion, please say nay.

The sound of silence.

Those voting for the motion, please say yea.

**Some Hon. Members:** Yea!

**Speaker:** The yeas have it, and seeing as there were no nays, I’d call that unanimous.

[Hear, hear!]

#### Orders of the Day (Government)

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

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

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Clerk:** Order No. 1, adjourned debate on the Draft Address.

Debate was adjourned by the hon. Member from O’Leary-Inverness.

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

**R. Henderson:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

As I alluded to say, to talk a little bit about the throne speech, a number of the issues on how thin it was – you know, a pretty thin document there – and where the pictures were from and whatnot; I’ll try to bring everybody back up to speed.

I concluded my comments on our health care system. I wanted to raise a few points on that. I noted that PEI is probably on a worst-per-capita basis of any health care number, as an indicator of where we are at in health care in the country of Canada.

But I think the thing I wanted to mention a little bit – and I watch this pretty closely in O’Leary. The Community Hospital in O’Leary – it’s a wonderful facility. It’s really what I would think is the model for health care in a rural community.

It kind of fits in the concept of the medical home concept, or neighbourhoods and all those kinds of things, where we have a health centre – call it health home, whatever you want to call it; it’s still the same thing it’s always been – and then you also have acute care services that are there. Mostly, they focus around convalescent and palliative care services, as well as restorative care services. And then you also have the long-term care section of the facility. I think there are four physicians that work out of there.

The whole concept is to try to keep services in your community, but you’re not going to get all your services. We understand that the Prince County Hospital and Queen Elizabeth Hospital are going to provide a certain level of service. As a former minister, I know we can’t duplicate everything everywhere. But if you look at where our community hospitals are, that model in O’Leary is a perfect concept for that.

The thing that concerns me, and like I say, the concept works wonderfully, but where it lacks – and this is what happens with all of our medical homes across the province: if you don’t have the staff to fulfill the services that you require, then it becomes a failure.

[4:05 p.m.]

When I start looking at the vacancies that I see in O’Leary, it’s been slowly creeping up. I can think of back in my time, as I watched, there’d always be a couple of nurse vacancies, an LPN vacancy, maybe some other vacancy. Now we’re up to 35 to 37 vacancies at the hospital in O’Leary. That makes factors come into play.

If I look at the issues where some of those vacancies – physiotherapy. If you don’t have physiotherapy, it’s very hard to deliver the restorative care services that many people require. And you want your restorative care

services in your home community because if you’re providing it all, you’re taking up beds in places like the QEH or the Prince County Hospital. You want to get those people out so they can get those services, and they can get, then, back home as quick as they possibly can. It makes the system flow. When you have these vacancies, you’re not able to do that. I see that, time and time again, and when we’re up to that volume of vacancies, it really starts to give me concern.

Is government not making an effort to try to fill these vacancies? Some of them are pretty common vacancies. It could be a maintenance person, it could be an RCW, LPNs.... You would assume that in seven years, this government could have a level of filling these vacancies that are going to keep a facility operating as smoothly as possible. If it’s a case where the maintenance person has to have a certain high level, why can’t they have maybe lower levels of abilities to provide maintenance services to the facility?

The other I wanted to mention, too, and another great facility that’s in my district, is the Lennox Island Health Centre. I know the Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke’s wife used to work there. I believe she’s retired at the moment and probably providing him good services and backup supports as an MLA. But anyway, that facility, once again, too, provides all-encompassing services for the people of Lennox Island and others. When COVID broke out, anybody could go get their vaccines and shots there. Once again, a great facility, and it provides great services to many, many people in the community and the region in my riding.

One thing I’d mention – and we talked a little bit about the former Minister of Health, who unceremoniously passed away recently. He was up for the opening of our new Island EMS ambulance base in O’Leary. It’s something I’d been working on for some time, to get a new facility there. As luck would have it, a match – well, I shouldn’t say a match. It caught fire and burnt, and were able to then – the insurance, and they had to replace it. Anyway, luck came our way, but it’s still....

[Interjections]

**R. Henderson:** Well, it happened at the rink too. Some of our rinks ended up burning, and we’ve been very fortunate when they did burn that we

were able to get them replaced, and the new facilities are there.

But here's one of the things that I thought I'd look up a little bit: What are our response times? I might note to the Minister of Health that our response times haven't been posted yet for this quarter. They were due the end of the month of March and nothing is up there at the moment. So, let's go to the numbers that were there for the last quarter, which ended the end of December.

For the response times in O'Leary, for an emergency response, it was 13 minutes and 4 seconds; non-emergency, 18 minutes and 7 seconds.

Now, O'Leary's numbers have been relatively stable, especially since the new ambulance base has been put in place there, but if you start looking at some of them, like the Member from Souris-Elmira – their numbers are pretty shocking. When you look at Souris and Alberton, they are very concerning. I think those are numbers that you need to start to look at. Those services aren't to where they were.

But the Member from Georgetown-Pownal always goes back to say, "Well, when you guys were there...." So, let's start showing a little bit of the numbers. I thought I'd look to see what the numbers were in 2018-19. Emergency response time: 9 minutes and 13 seconds. Today, 13 minutes and 4 seconds. A good four minutes longer.

As much as that might not sound like very much, there's a very complicated formula that determines these average response times, as I think you might be well aware, Mr. Speaker. So, to see a four-minute response time probably equals, more than likely, another 20 minutes in actual response times on many calls. That's very concerning. That can impact lives. I think it's something that we have to try to make sure that – when we look at these numbers, they've progressively gotten worse. We're already getting emails, I think, members of the opposition, on how deplorable the system is. I recall, as a member –

**P. Bevan-Baker:** (Indistinct) somebody right now.

**R. Henderson:** Yeah, they're probably watching me – listened about this.

[4:10 p.m.]

Once again, a lack of staffing – every year, the government stands up and says we've got another graduating class, but it never gets through to the next graduating class. We're still left with vacancies, positions that aren't being filled – that kind of a process.

But I do commend our Island EMS paramedics. They're wonderful people, and I know the Member from Souris-Elmira is one of them, or previously a member. I see them in my district. They do great work. It's got to be an extremely stressful position, and I certainly commend everyone that enters that particular profession and can be as professional as they possibly can under very trying circumstances.

Anyway, I just wanted to give a comment that the new Island EMS depot on Willow Avenue in O'Leary is a wonderful facility. It's new, modern, and upgraded, and I think it shows that we do appreciate our paramedics in O'Leary, for sure. I do think the response times somewhat reflect that, although it has declined somewhat significantly in that period of time since this government has taken office.

Another one that I wanted to make comment of – it always talks about the electronic medical records. What a debacle that one's been. It's been a debacle for many governments; I don't want to put it all on this particular government. But we still can't seem to get a fully integrated electronic medical record system that not only communicates with our pharmacies, with our hospitals, with our Island EMS, with other provinces – because we have to have a billing system, as the minister would well know, that is somewhat efficient and works if our Islanders go to another province – but you can't seem to get that out the door and get it complete and fully integrated and working.

I just find that astounding, in seven years. I do recall that they had a version and it was cancelled just when it was launched. They said, "Oh, it didn't work." They went back to the drawing board. Another one – it didn't work. Are you on the third one now, minister, for our Island electronic medical records? It's just unbelievable how long that particular service seems to be taking.

I will comment on the throne speech. It says in the speech: "To address the shortage of providers, my government will partner with the

province of Nova Scotia to support five internationally trained physicians already in Prince Edward Island through a practice-ready assessment program.” I do think that that sounds very promising. I like the way of thinking on that. I know they have, I believe in the residency program, one internationally trained student position that is there through the residency program.

But when it comes to the fact that we’re talking about training 20 graduates from our UPEI-MUN medical school, the question I have always had in this is: Where are the resident positions? Because you’re going to need 40 resident positions – 40. I believe right now we have seven per year. So, you’re a long way from trying to make sure that these people not only study and complete their studies here, but that they actually practice and do their residency here, because if we’re going through the process of training people and they do their residency in other provinces, other jurisdictions, the likelihood of them coming back tends to be a lot lower, I guess is the best way to describe it. I don’t want to say anybody that does their residency in another location....

I do think that there are wonderful opportunities for some internationally trained people that seem to like to come to Canada. We need to try to make sure that their credentials are as close to what we require here in Prince Edward Island and that we can get those people a process where they can get and practice and live here; it’s very important.

I talked a little bit more on some of the issues around supporting our seniors. I wrote a comment down. I want to speak a little bit about the Willows in O’Leary.

The Willows is a community care facility in O’Leary. I am so impressed with that facility. I’m so impressed with the community and their efforts, that they went together, but it also tells about the massive complications of government and government bureaucracy. It can be stifling.

[4:15 p.m.]

In this particular project – I guess there are debates on how long it’s taken for us to get started on this, but it was probably about a ten-year project before it became reality. It started with a bunch of people – myself included – getting together and looking at an alternative to the existing community care facility that we had

that was an older facility. It was having a hard time meeting the standards. It would get qualifications on its inspections every year, and we tried to see what we could do to alleviate and look forward to what a facility would look like.

We dealt with the current owners of the existing facility that was there. Couldn’t seem to persuade them to put the investment into either an upgrade or to find a new site.

We then gave up on that option and then worked at the possibility of getting another organization to come and set up in O’Leary. For whatever reasons, the entrepreneurial community out there didn’t seem to want to see that there was an opportunity in O’Leary. Then we decided to go with forming a non-profit organization to see if that might work. There were alternatives around that, but in the end, we wound up forming a cooperative.

Co-ops are pretty common in the western end of the Island. The Tignish Royal Star co-op for seafood processing is probably one of the most successful cooperatives in probably Canada. We have our O’Leary Farmers Co-op, our grocery store, feed mill – there are all kinds of different cooperative groups. We have potato co-ops.

But anyway, we decided to form a cooperative. The problem when we formed the cooperative was that it had no history. When it went to government for financing, or it went to Canada Mortgage and Housing, no history, so, “We don’t think we can provide you a whole lot of funding.”

Now, we looked at other alternatives. We did finally persuade – and I have to give the Egmont MP Bobby Morrissey a bit of credit on this – Canada Mortgage and Housing to come forward and back a loan. I’ll give some kudos to the current government; they did support providing the wages to hire a person to do all the paperwork. It’s phenomenal, the amount of paperwork you have to go through to get money out of the federal government – even the provincial government for that matter. Anyway, we did have a constituent of mine, Jordan MacDonald, who helped with that, and that made a big difference.

But eventually, we finally got enough support to say that the project will start. Well, then, COVID hit. The prices were going crazy, contractors, workers – it was just massive confusion. Then there was eventually a call – it

came to me from the board – saying, “I think project is going to die. We can’t work our way through this.”

In the end, I wound up going to Ottawa; met with the then Minister of Housing in Ottawa with MP Morrissey, and we finally got the project back on track and gave the community group some encouragement. Eventually, we got the project complete.

When I toured the facility, I had a chance to bring leader Rob Mitchell up and take a look at the facility. It’s full today; a waiting list of 80 people to get into it. It’s built and designed to a net zero standard. Its operational costs are very standard going forward, or very predictable, I guess is a better way to describe it. It’s probably one of the greatest accomplishments that our community has put together in achieving that during my tenure as an MLA for the area.

But I say, it really comes with – you always have to have a champion. I’m going to give Sally Lockhart and Francie Lewis as the two individuals that were there from day one, first meeting, right to the opening – if it wasn’t for their intestinal fortitude and dedication to see that this project was not going to falter.... They made it happen. Anyway, we’re in a great situation; it’s a great facility.

Another little story I wanted to give on the whole issue around it, too, was, once again, the complications of licensing. There was no real opportunity for a provisional licence. When you’re a brand-new facility, they don’t inspect it and say, “You’re ready, here’s your licence, away you go.” You have to have everything up, operational and running, before you have a person move in. That made it very difficult. Not only did they have all their groceries, everything had to be operational.

I dealt with the previous minister. I will say he did whatever he could to try to see what we could do to work with the organization to make sure it could get its licensing. But I kept arguing with him and some of the staff. You have a licence for the existing facility, which is far inferior to the current brand new, spanking new facility, but it’s a got a licence, but we can’t get a licence for this one. It just defies logic.

[4:20 p.m.]

Now, eventually we did get it up, we did get it going, and we slowly transitioned people in. But

here’s what the issue becomes: if you’re a non-profit organization or a co-operative, your financials are always based on opening day and making sure the facility is full. It doesn’t work very good when you have to be half full for a couple of months.

That’s eventually what we had to go through, but over time, we did work through it. We extended loans and.... Anyway, in the end it’s been a success. I really appreciate the things that everybody did, even on the government side and the bureaucracy, for kind of working us through this.

But I do think there are lessons to be learned. It’s a model that can be done in many communities, especially rural communities. We need to learn from what the O’Leary experience does. I would also argue that if I knew what I know now back then, I never would have gone down this path. But that’s unfortunate. If we are in that situation, I would hope that we’re encouraged to make sure that either there’s naivete in us as MLAs to try to push a project through or that we can make a system that’s much simpler and much more effective to deal with that.

Another issue I run into – it says in the throne speech: “Supporting our seniors will continue to be a priority for my government.” But you can go to many, many issues and you’ll find out where that’s really not the case.

I’m going to bring up one: it’s the seniors independence program. There’s a significant amount of seniors that are not eligible for this. The incomes are very low. But I ran into one that was an interesting one. It was a farmer. Farm assets – because I think if you have anything more than a few hundred thousand dollars’ worth of assets, you’re not eligible.

So, I had a farmer who was past 65. He has liabilities on his land. He goes to the seniors independence program to see if he could qualify. “No, you don’t qualify.” He had hardly any income, but because he had farm assets.... He said, “Well, I’m trying to sell it. If I could sell it, I’m not going to pay off my liabilities, so I’m still no farther ahead.” So, they don’t take into account liabilities.

I hope the Minister of Agriculture brings this forward to his colleagues to say you’re discriminating against farmers because you’re not taking into account their liabilities. It’s

wonderful if you can say you've got 100 acres of land, but you don't own it. It's owned, really, by the bank or a financial institution.

I think if you're looking at trying to support seniors, let's look at trying to make sure that they do get the supports. This particular individual wanted some help with snow blowing – tractor was broken down – or even get some lawn cut. There were just a number of things that he wanted some supports for. I commend the minister; she tried, but she said, "No, that's the policy, and we're not going to change it." That's an issue that I see as fundamental there.

I know it says here they're going to try to add 85 new long-term care beds to come online, with another 200 over the next two years, but one of the biggest challenges – I think it still exists, if I look at a place like Le Chez-Nous in Wellington. Getting the staff is the problem to meet the standards to be a long-term care designation.

If you're not willing to correct the staffing problems – and the minister knows he's got all kinds of staffing problems in his own acute care facilities and the existing long-term care facilities. Where are you going to find the staff? There needs to be something that's creative, that you can figure out what you're going to do in staffing these services.

I'd suggest, and I'll give the suggestion to the minister right now: I think maybe you have to change some of your designations. Long-term care is a set designation. Maybe you need two levels of long-term care. Maybe you have to open up some beds that are a little different. Does everybody need the same nursing supports? Maybe they don't.

But I just think those are some things that you're going to have to do. If you're not, when you're talking about adding more long-term care beds, the only suggestion that I could have for him is maybe go with bunk beds. Maybe you could stack them. But that's ridiculous, right?

[4:25 p.m.]

You've got to come up with policy. You can't be starting to put people in – in O'Leary, they were talking about, can we adapt the chapel to be a long-term care? We could put two people in the chapel. Like, where are you coming from? You're going to stog them in the morgue, even. You've got to come up with some ideas that work here. I think that's one version, is your

level of staffing for long-term care. Maybe there has to be some different ways of engaging and measuring that.

As I move on a little bit more, we talk a little bit more about energy needs. I have to talk a little bit about one of the big projects in my district that's been operational for some time now: the West Cape Wind Farm. Now, I know the West Cape Wind Farm has reached out. They'd love to put a few more windmills up in that area. Finding anybody to talk to them in government is a little bit of a hard problem, they're saying. "Don't return my calls" is what I get from the West Cape Wind Farm.

There's also the Skinners Pond wind farm. Now they're talking it might be operational in 2028. It was one of the first announcements, I believe, that Egmont MP Bobby Morrissey and the member that was representing Georgetown-Pownal at the time announced. That's got to be back like, 2020, 2019. Haven't seen a windmill yet. Haven't seen a power line. Haven't seen anything happen. Get projects announced, but get them going. Make them happen.

One of the biggest projects in my district, I have to admit, is the substation at Woodstock – a massive project. I commend – finally, Maritime Electric has got that moving and construction in place. I think that it's operational; I don't know how fully operational.

But I kind of always felt that that might have an impact on the issue around Howlan Road. The previous Minister of Energy, who I guess is back with us here now, said, "Not moving the power lines on Howlan Road." But the people on Howlan Road are still disappointed at this. They're still hoping and trying to be hopeful that at some point in time, if there's a project moving farther west, that they'll somehow get their power lines moved away from their homes.

Three-phase power is something. Not a thing in here about three-phase power. It's something that just about every rural farm, every rural business – I can go out around West Point. They're still hoping that they'll see some remnants of three-phase power. In fact, one of the previous ministers made promises that there was going to be. I had them in to see some of the manufacturing businesses. "Three-phase power is coming." First thing, the poles went up.

[Interjection]

**R. Henderson:** Yeah, everything was looking pretty promising. No sign of three-phase power. Just two lines; didn't put the third one while there was an opportunity to do that. They didn't do it.

If I look at a place like H.F. Stewart's, Betts's sawmill, the wharf at West Point, and even the park, three-phase power would be an asset for those people. There's a number of potato warehouses. I've had MacLennans, and I've had Ellises contact me: Is there any hope that three-phase power is coming? What do I say to them? I try to say that this government doesn't seem to listen to much of what I say, but I try to suggest. Here's my opportunity to say a few things, but we've got to get these things done.

Another issue that we always have – the Na'ku'set solar farm. There's some promise and hope there that's coming. They're talking about 60,500 solar panels in Mount Pleasant on land owned now by the Lennox Island Development Corporation. I guess there's going to be some battery storage there, from what the public meeting had. I'm told not very much. I think it'll operate for four hours or something if the farm went down. I kind of question why they wouldn't be going to at least eight hours, try to get a little closer through the night, but the comment was that it doesn't mean we can't put solar battery storage to go farther at a later date. But for now, they're just looking at about four hours, I believe.

I think, PEI, we use about 400 megawatts. There was a couple of days we were right on the cusp of that – 403, I think we maxed out at. We were fortunate enough that there was just enough wind to keep us going at different times. But the day that that had have been cold and no wind – those are the days that the warmings go out.

We were very fortunate this year. We really have seen no major storms. That would be large amounts of freezing rain, wind, and all those kinds of damages. I really question government's – it's great to see that they're writing that our energy requirements are important. We need an additional 100 megawatts of capacity, but we really need to see some action on this and see where we're going on this.

[4:30 p.m.]

As the chair of the Natural Resources committee, we certainly have had presenters in about batteries. It does seem to me that that

technology is advancing significantly. Let's hope that there will be some better solutions that will come that are very obvious moving forward. I just think there needs to be a little more emphasis put on that.

I've mentioned a number of times in this Legislature – I know we talked about wetlands. I'm going to divert from that a little bit and say we need a forestry industry on Prince Edward Island. We have so much woodland that has not been utilized. I think we need to expand on our biomass potential, especially with the damages that have occurred from Fiona.

But I know from my own perspective – and I do plan on going on Saturday to the Woodlot Owners Association annual meeting – I do feel that we've got to get some value in our wood products. Right now, I don't see how you could even conceivably make a buck at wood harvest. I even question if a lot of the forestry contractors, even if it was viable to harvest a tree in any part of PEI, that that would be viable – the price of fuel, wages; the cost of equipment is significant.

But I do want to say that I have some businesses – Glen Wood forestry, Jamie Wallace Forestry, and Betts's sawmill. Betts's sawmill is probably the first or second largest sawmill on Prince Edward Island. But they are saying the same issues: it's hard to get product; product isn't worth much; tariffs; cost of harvest is significant. The amount of low-cost, valuable wood is not what it used to be, and when you want to try to be able to sell some of your birch or poplar or your maple, the heat pumps – there's no market much for that stuff anymore.

But yet we've got this mass resource. I think the government is looking at doing an upgrade on the energy from waste plant down here. I would hope that it really tries to establish some sort of a market and tries to incorporate as much wood biomass into that, as well as some – and maybe there are many other facilities. I know under our time, the O'Leary Hospital, we put in a biomass system. I think Prince County Hospital. There was some significant expansion in our biomass industry.

But I keep saying, I look to ask people out there: Who do I contact if I could get somebody to come and maybe woodchip some of my land and make use of that? Nobody knows. There's Arsenaults; they have their own little market that

exists. There are no new markets, so they're really not interested in any more product.

I've talked a lot about the inaccuracy of wetland mapping. Our forestry industry is on its knees. If we can find the opportunity to harvest trees – and I've been thinking about this a lot. I've gone out to some constituents that were told that they can't harvest these trees mechanically. They question whether these maps are accurate.

Think about this. If you could harvest those trees – the technology today, it's not a horse and an axe anymore. There's some real equipment out there that can spread and diversify weight of a machine to harvest this stuff, and you're doing it once every 100 years, 150 years. We're not talking massive intrusion on property or land; we're talking about being able to harvest trees responsibly, do it in a way.... Maybe you can do it on frozen ground. Maybe you can do it in the summer when it's dry. There are all kinds of provisions that could be done to allow this to happen.

I really encourage the Minister of Land and Environment – let's bring some common sense to this. Let's understand that if we're only going to harvest these trees once in 100 years or 150 years, we can do that. Or if we want to harvest them and maybe plant Christmas trees. There are all kinds of things that could be done that could be as environmentally responsible and make use of this land, make use of this product, and create some industry, create some wealth for landowners. That's what we've got to be doing.

Another comment in here is: "Prince Edward Island's land is one of our most important assets. Coastal erosion is a growing reality for our province." Well, this government has a shoreline protection moratorium out. You can't even try to protect your land if you want.

I know, Mr. Speaker, you've brought this up numerous times, too, about what's going on with this. Yes, there was an incident at Point Deroche that probably didn't go the way it probably should have, but let's not stop doing all shoreline protection. Time and time again, we have people that are trying to protect their assets. We should be able to come up with a formula that allows them to do that.

[4:35 p.m.]

I have to admit, I give the former Minister of Environment credit. They had a formula where

they trained their contractors that were doing shoreline protection. You had to have a licence to do that, and do it properly. Now, if the Point Deroche thing was done improperly, by all means, pull that licence, but don't cancel the whole program because one contractor may not have fulfilled their obligations to do so.

I mentioned this before in the Legislature – I have a neighbour who had some shoreline protection on his property in front of his house, and he had a lighthouse there too. The contractor could definitely go; they could redo and re-fix up just the length that the existing shoreline protection was. Couldn't go another 50 feet one way or another 50 feet the other way – another 100 feet which would have protected his entire property; no, can't do that.

But what do we see? We just see land that's starting to erode in around that. It defeats the purpose. Where's the common sense?

We had a contractor that wouldn't have harmed a blade of grass the day that they put and hauled the armour stone in front of his property. It looks fine; it looks different, but it's effective. It's working, but not working 100 percent the way it could because we've got a shoreline protection moratorium on. I get calls, I'll say weekly, from people who are saying: "How do I...?" And I say: "Is there any kind of structure there at all now? If there is, then I suggest go talk to a licensed contractor. If you have nothing there, you're kind of out of luck until this moratorium...."

Once again, the former minister is now back on our side of the House. He said he wasn't going to lift the shoreline protection moratorium. I hope that the current minister, who I'm quite impressed with, is bringing some common sense to this particular department. Hopefully this moratorium can be lifted....

[Interjection]

**R. Henderson:** I don't mind giving credit where credit is due.

We talk about land ownership; it does deeply matter to Islanders. If there's one issue – and I think it's the one thing that's even within our Constitution in Canada, and I think Joe Ghiz made sure that that was in place – is that we have property rights in Prince Edward Island. The Province of PEI can deal with restrictions of property, of who owns property. So, it has

always been a contentious matter here. We've always been dealing with our land and making sure that we have the rights and abilities to acquire land. We didn't want to be absentee landlords here in Prince Edward Island.

We need to be able to do things that protect our agriculture. I always sort of say this: our agricultural land – I want to protect my agricultural land, and I want to probably even expand into more agricultural land, but we have to encourage farmers to use their land for agricultural purposes. If we're going to just say no, you can't sell it, you're going to impact the equity on that property. You're going to put too many restrictions on it.

Now, I think the minister made an announcement at the Federation of Agriculture annual meeting that they're going to try to come up with some sort of a land trust concept. That could work. I guess it depends on how encouraging that might be. But if it means that I've got to sign my rights to say that that land has to stay this way forever into perpetuity, I have concerns about that because I don't want to impinge on my heirs of my property and estate to what they might be able to do with their land in future.

You need to be able to allow farmers to see what they think is in the best interest of their land. So, I do think that I'm curious as to what this provincial land trust program is all about and look forward to hearing that. Maybe we'll see some more issues in the budget.

But it's the same thing as – the government turned around and established farm prices on land by its potato wart buyback program, established at \$11,000 an acre. Now, I'm curious to know how much land they actually have acquired. I know they had a budget that was going to acquire about half of that land. But anyway, I'm just sort of curious as to how that will unfold. But it does set the bar at a pretty high level. So, if government is trying to say you don't want to see land values too high, it's setting the bar right off the bat.

Another issue it says in here: They expect transparency when it comes to who owns the land.

[4:40 p.m.]

One small, little item that was brought up by our Natural Resources committee was the issue for

hunters: How do you find out who does own the land? You can go on the map, and you can find a property number. I remember the Minister of Finance and Affordability says, "Yeah, that makes sense. Why can't we do that?" Haven't seen it yet. Maybe it's coming; is it, minister?

It's not that it's a huge secret. You can basically find the property number off the map online, make a phone call to the department, tell them the property number, and they'd tell you the owner. But why do we have to make it so complicated? If you can put the property number on, you can have some kind of a correlation online to get to who the owner is. Why does this stuff take so long and it's so hard? It's hard done by.

[Interjection]

Oh, the IT systems – yes, I know. Yes, there's always the reasons.

The next one I get into is our primary industries. This is one that's near and dear to my heart. I've got probably the largest amount of oyster processing companies in my riding. I'll mention some of them: Five Star Shellfish, just down the road from my place. We have J.P. Shellfish. We have Leslie Hardy and Sons; Burleigh Bros.... The other one is King Shellfish, I think, is the name, and not far away is the Valley Pearl. In my district, a constituent I have is Sweet Oysters, a fantastic operator. He's out at Gordon's Wharf I guess it's called.

I know that these guys are hurting. They are struggling because they've got markets that they can't attain. It's too great a risk for them to go through all the effort, pack and process and wash and ship these oysters off, and two days later, they're getting a call that there's a couple of bad ones. If anybody's had a bad one in a box of oysters, they're bad.

It's a tough market for all of them. To my knowledge, those processors haven't received hardly a dime yet. They're all hurting. Great to see all these wonderful announcements, but nobody gets any money. The program is either too complicated or doesn't qualify. I've got the Bideford Hatchery, one of the main hatcheries on Prince Edward Island, in my district, and the PEI Shellfish Museum. I hope the museum is going to flourish because the industry is going to be totally lost, but we can follow up both ways I guess here.

I think we certainly need to be more reflective of what our oyster industry requires. I give government credit; it has put together – I think MRSB is going to be doing a long-term plan for our oyster industry.

But here's my first thing: when I check the RFP, it doesn't even have to be finished until August. I mean, the industry is gone by August. You've got to have a plan sooner than that. I probably could write a plan in a week. I'm sure the minister probably could or the Aquaculture Alliance. I mean, it's not rocket science here. You've got to have a way to keep our industry going. You've got to support both our public harvesters and our growers, and try to see what you can do to make this a five-year option.

I've asked questions in this House numerous times. I wanted to find out from the minister: Are you supporting the importation of seed into Prince Edward Island from the United States? He refuses to answer that – no answer. I stood up at the Shellfish Association meeting and said my piece. I told them I was supporting it. I didn't get a great, great reception I might add, but they know where I stand. I had lots of calls afterwards and I explained it out, and they seemed to be – they have at least a better appreciation for it.

But I want the minister at least to be up front and say what it is that you're going to do, how you're going to get this industry to go from a five-year plan, maybe ten-year – or is this going to be 25 or 30 years like happened with the Malpeque oyster disease? That was a version that it took a lot of research.

Now, recently they did find the genome of MSX. There's a bit of a key that they might find a solution, and they might also find the genome for Dermo. Those two things – just because you found one, there's a better chance you can find the other.

That's what I see with our oyster industry. It is imperative to my district. I know some people are trying to take some training programs, and that's good, but there are only so many truckers. This is an industry that some of the professions – they don't have the prerequisites for certain programs.

[4:45 p.m.]

But I'll give you another example that I had. I had a guy who holds a public fishing licence, but

last year, he didn't work in that particular industry, – fishing – because of all the uncertainty. He worked as a shellfish labourer. He goes to see if “Can I get some training to start my own business?” was his option. Oh, no. No, you don't qualify. You didn't fish publicly last year. You were a shellfish labourer.

Then if you go to the processor and say is there any support for some of the existing shellfish labourers that you have that you would like to take them back and have some core workers so you can help train maybe some of these public fishers who we could a program for? No, no programs for you.

I even talked to one of the owners of a processing business from the Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke's riding. He tried to get some training but couldn't get anything either; they couldn't get any money. We asked the minister. He stands up and says it's all false, no such thing. But here's two MLAs and a whole industry saying the opposite. How out of touch can a minister be, and a department? You have to be able to listen to these people. You have to know what their situations are.

I have confidence in the minister, the Member from Alberton-Bloomfield, beautiful riding that it is. He has some significant fishing area. I share Cascumpec Bay with him. We share a number of boundaries of rivers and estuaries. He should understand the industry. I want to see some activity happening. Let's find out what some of these issues are.

I've made calls to the former Minister of Finance about the issue of calling loans, foreclosures; that's another big factor here. If we have processors that start getting their loans called, there's no way they can pay that. You start calling those – it becomes a house of cards. And Finance PEI holds a lot of these loans. I know they haven't called the loans, but there are other lenders out there. There's Farm Credit, there's the banks, there's credit unions, and they're all getting nervous.

I suggest that somebody like the Premier should take his authority as Premier of a province and reach out to these financial institutions on Bay Street in Toronto and try to work out a plan to say we've got a plan; we're moving forward. We're going to be able to keep these people (Indistinct); don't call any loans. I'm not even asking to give them the money. Just don't call their loan, because once a few loans get called,

everybody is going down. And the Province of PEI will be one of the bigger ones that are going to fall on this.

We have to try to do some supports that support this industry through wage supports for the existing shellfish labourers in our processing plants, for even the growers that are out there. There's a significant amount of culling and grading and getting those cages up, and getting them, if nothing else, on land. The last thing we want is to have navigational issues where some fellows just walk away because they have no choice to. They can't get the loan to get the fuel to put in their barge to go and lift the cages. These are the types of things. These are real. These are happening.

We need some things that will allow these people to have those supports. It's great to say you can hire a public fisher, but it's only a public fisher that fished last year. You know, there's a thousand licences out there and there's a few hundred that fished. Let's start to look at all that.

Now, I think there's going to be a buyback program. I know Egmont MP Morrissey had mentioned that there's a buyback coming. That will deal on that side of the public sector, but we still need to take these public fishers and try to provide them with an opportunity on what they can do that can be productive, maybe enhance our industry moving forward when it does come back, and yet provide supports for their families and keep the profession alive.

I know the LMDA funding is federal money, but it's administered by the Province. The Province always takes credit that that's our money, but no it's not. We've had that confirmed here in the Legislature.

[4:50 p.m.]

Let's work with our federal partners. Let's forget the blame game – that's what I said at the PEI Shellfish Association annual meeting – and let's try to work together. There is a reason why we have a Minister of Fisheries on Prince Edward Island. They are there to work with our federal partners, who do have (Indistinct). The oyster industry has always been a shared jurisdiction – always has been. Like I say, the public fishery is all licensed through DFO, but the processing is 100 percent provincial, and leasing has been co-managed – both federal and provincial.

So, get over laying the blame. Get together. Let's come up with some plans. Sign the Atlantic fisheries fund. Let's get that money flowing. The federal government – it's been out there since February. I'm not sure why it hasn't been signed yet, but let's get that going very quickly. Maybe updates can be provided when you're going to sign that agreement.

But I think it really boils down to, like the mayor from Tyne Valley stated in his song, a fisher's got to fish. And I keep saying, to add to that: the money's got to flow. Government, you've got an obligation to get the flow. I'll add that little line in there for the lyric, you know.

[Interjection]

**R. Henderson:** Yeah, exactly.

When it comes to our lobster industry, right now, that's starting. My riding is a bit unique. I have a south side and a north side, the LFA 24 and LFA 25.

I've got West Point and Howards Cove in LFA 25, two fairly big ports.

I went to the annual meeting of the port authority in West Point here just about a week or two weeks ago, and little things that they're trying to get done, whether it's a pothole patched – now, once again, it's port authority land, but sometimes they'd like a little help here and there; it's hard to get out of the Province.

Anyway, I know I was talking to the department; I guess it's the Department of – maybe Land and Environment, Brian Thompson, to try to get some help on what we're doing with one of the.... There was actually a rock groyne that was put out to protect the West Point Harbour, and right now, the port authority asked me who's responsible to clean that out. Nobody seems to know.

So, I appreciate that the department will look into this, but I just don't know why answers get so hard to do and why plans can't get put in place. But I do commend Brian. He's a great guy, a great engineer, and he did a wonderful job in their work at West Point in shoreline protection there and protecting the harbour.

Anyway, on the north side, LFA 24, I have three wharves there. I have Hardy's Channel, the Bideford wharf, and Lennox Island.

This will be their first year for their brand-new wharf in Lennox Island, and it's a beauty. It's a beauty, yeah. They did everything right on that one. They've got a new slip, they've got lighting, and they've even got electrical hookups. I've been trying to get the minister responsible for tourism and fisheries to try to get a few electrical hookups at our parks, but anyway, they have that there. It's well lit. It's all paved. It's a beautiful wharf. I wish them every success and hope they have a great season on all three of those particular ports.

When it comes to our primary industries, I've been involved a bit in agriculture, and high diesel prices are going to really make an impact on our farmers.

Just the cost of engine oil is a lot more than what it was. I always look to see if I can get a five-gallon bucket for about \$90 of 15W-40 diesel oil. Can't find that anywhere for \$90 anymore. Now, about \$110 is about the cheapest you can get it for. I keep saying just changing oil on a farmer's farm is thousands of dollars – all the trucks they have, the tractors, and you change them two or three times a year. A pretty big cost. Fertilizer cost – I think that's going to scare a lot of people. Just transportation, to haul stuff here and there and everywhere, is going to be very costly.

And then the other part of it: labour costs are all up. I don't begrudge anybody the increases in their minimum wage, but when a minimum wage goes up, everybody has to go up. So, that has a big impact on our potato growers.

Farmers across PEI, it says in the throne speech, are adapting to more predictable conditions. I don't know where they came up with that. Predictable? Oh, it says unpredictable. Yes, they're adapting to more unpredictable conditions. What we're seeing is just nothing but unpredictability.

[4:55 p.m.]

But I commend – I've got a lot of potato farmers in my district. I have the Canadian Potato Museum. Fantastic place. Their tourism numbers were, I think, 20-some thousand last year. It was up again from the year before. Actually, the top tourism destination in western PEI is the Canadian Potato Museum. Go figure.

Anyway, I'll give a comment to a number of farms: Triple S Farms, Smallman Farms,

MacLennan Farms – and MacLennan Farms I have to single out. Katie MacLennan is the new chair of the PEI Potato Board, and the first female chair, and I'll tell you, a very capable lady. She'll do good in representing that industry as well. You have J and J Farms; Troy Rennie's got a grading station at the old O'Leary Potato Packers; and Justin Rogers, Picturesque Farms, is into the potatoes now.

I commend the government for saying that supporting succession planning is very important, and I do see that. I remember in my time as minister, as short as it might have been, I did identify three major issues that this industry is facing, and succession planning was number one. Those that can figure out succession planning will be the ones that survive.

The other issues I'll add into this are decisions of the head. Unfortunately – and I know the Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, being a farmer, and the same with the current Minister of Agriculture – we do tend to make way too many decisions with our heart and not our head. We have to try to make business sense of it and go from there. The other is embracing technology. I struggle with that one every day, but it is something that I think is important for farmers to figure out. I give kudos for that one.

But nothing on forestry. We're certainly seeing that industry collapse. The damages from Fiona and Dorian; the less use of paper; tariffs; heat pumps – all those things are having an impact on that.

As we move on – we're getting there, Mr. Speaker. A couple more pages.

On education, I certainly want to mention – I don't have a lot to say on education; the Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park is really the expertise that I rely on. But we have the O'Leary Elementary School, probably one of the older schools in the province. I think it was built in the late '50s. But structurally, I might add, in really good shape. I commend Principal David Costello there, a tremendous principal, and the staff.

Then I have Ellerslie Elementary and John J. Sark elementary. And not in the district that I represent, but Hernewood and Westisle impact all our students. As well, I have some adult education in the district through Career Bridges. I really commend Nancy Hamill and Paula McCue there for their work in trying to retrain

and do some career exploration. I really commend government to continue Career Bridges through the LMDA agreement, a very important process there.

The other big issue in my district is child care. We have a number of child care facilities through the early years centres. The CHANCES one in O'Leary; although not in my district, the Tyne Valley Play School; and the Lennox Island Daycare are all early year centres. It's still a big challenge to get kids in and for them to get the staff that they require to meet the standards.

When it gets to communities – and in fact, my next stop is going to be at the Central Prince municipality annual meeting. I'll try to pass on good regards from the Legislature there. I have Lennox Island, the municipality of O'Leary, Central Prince, and Lot 11. Half of my district is incorporated; the other half is not.

I commend our communities, the work that they do keeping their fire departments going. There is certainly lots that they do in providing services. I meet with their mayors fairly frequently, and the Chief as well. I tried to bring this up in the Legislature with the Indigenous Affairs, the current Premier, the issues of Lennox Island – they do not have deeds on Lennox Island. They have what's called certificates of possession. All that whole community is not eligible for any of the programs that we put out.

I use the example of the seniors home repair. If they have a certificate of possession, they aren't eligible for some of the supports on Lennox Island, but they're also, because they're on Lennox Island, not eligible for programs that the Province has. There's this whole group of people, and I've asked the Premier, who is the minister responsible, to meet with the Chief. As of today, no meeting.

**An Hon. Member:** Call the hour.

[5:00 p.m.]

**R. Henderson:** I'd like to adjourn debate, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

**Speaker:** Thank you, member.

Shall it carry? Carried.

I'd like to call on the hon. Government House Leader.

[Interjections]

**Speaker:** Extend the hour has been requested.

[Interjections]

**Speaker:** I didn't hear a no.

[Interjection]

**Speaker:** No. Okay, there is a no.

By the way, the hon. Government House Leader has the floor.

**M. MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, that this House adjourn until April 9<sup>th</sup>, at 1:00 p.m.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

[The Legislature adjourned until Thursday, 9 April 2026 at 1:00 p.m.]