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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

THURSDAY, 7 MARCH 2024

[1:27 p.m.]

[Hon. D. Compton in the chair]

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. M. McLane: Madam Speaker, on February 29th, the Leader of the Opposition asked questions in the House on Hope Air, which were taken as notice.

In 2023, Hope Air assisted 1,318 PEI patients with 3,775 travel arrangements, at an average value of \$353 per patient. Many family members of patients also benefitted from Hope Air's support, as they were able to travel with an provide valuable assistance to patients in need.

Yesterday, the Member from Borden-Kinkora asked me questions about the provincial emergency operations committee, portions of which were taken as notice.

The provincial emergency operations committee for critical care, which addresses issues at both the PCH and QEH, is made up of provincial staff. Within the structure, which follows the same incident command structure as the provincial EMO, the provincial EOC is designed to support the local site emergency response. As such, we have also stood up local EOCs at both the PCH and the QEH. These site EOCs report into the provincial EOC and include PCH and QEH physicians and leaders. The focus is to have provincial decision makers take actions to support the needs identified by local EOCs.

The provincial EOC includes: the interim CEO, provincial chief communications officer as the information officer, chief of medical affairs and chief operating officers as co-operation leads, chief innovation and technology officer as planning section lead, chief nursing and provincial practice officer and chief human resources officer supporting the planning section, the executive director of hospital services and patient flow, and our emergency response director.

Finally, there is a hospital operations committee that meets several times a week to discuss all hospital issues and report in to the provincial EOC. This group includes physicians from the PCH and western PEI.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[1:30 p.m.]

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Physician leaving Summerside

A question to the Minister of Health: There is word that another family doctor is leaving the Summerside area. From what I'm told, this will mean a few more thousand Islanders without access to a physician. Will the minister please tell this House whether another family doctor is leaving practice in the Summerside area, and what is being done to accommodate those patients?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Yes. Unfortunately, we were advised that a physician in his mid-70s has been diagnosed with a medical condition. That's personal information, but unfortunately, he's going to have to step away from his practice at this time.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: He didn't answer that question, so maybe tomorrow he'll come back with a response about what they're going to do to accommodate the patients.

Update to patient registry

Another question to the Minister of Health: We've been told that about 600 people were removed from the patient registry recently.

Will the minister please explain the process that was used to do this? Were 600 people removed from the patient registry as a result of getting a family physician? Or were people simply removed from the registry because they have given up, they passed away, or they moved on to another province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Yes, we have removed some patients from the patient registry. It is a very manual process, unfortunately. To date, about 600 have been assigned to a medical home or a health care provider. The numbers on the registry aren't reflective in real time, unfortunately. It's a bit of a take one off, put them on. So, there is a lag in updating that list. We will continue to work on the patient registry list.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Health minister's trip to Denmark

Question to the Minister of Health: Last October, the minister took a trip to Denmark. According to the expense reports that were filed, the Air Canada ticket charged to the minister cost nearly \$7,000. I will table that later. Will the minister please tell the House the reason for such an expensive plane ticket to Denmark?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

We did take some people to Denmark. They're a world leader in elder care. I think we're the fourth province to actually take that trip to see how they take care of their seniors. I think you'll see some actions from that trip in the budget debate that we come up to, but a very beneficial trip. They are

world leaders. Ontario, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia were there before us. It was an extreme example of how they take care of their seniors and help them stay at home longer.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I thought, perhaps, that the minister paid for other staff members to go – \$7,000 – but I see from the expense reports that the minister's assistant deputy minister also appears to have two additional plane tickets on the same trip. The first ticket was more than \$8,900 and the second ticket was for nearly \$3,400. So, it's turning into a fairly expensive trip. Then there's a \$7,200 ministerial expense for bus transportation within Denmark. So, I assume, looking at close to \$30,000 for this trip so far, just to go to – travel expenses – to Denmark.

What was the reason for this trip?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. M. McLane: Thank you. I would like to talk about the trip. We did have the opportunity to visit the dementia village that they have in Denmark that provides a really good environment for those with patients with dementia. That was one part of the trip.

We did visit a couple of manufacturers of really some highly technological advancements that they make over there. They can monitor heart rate and blood pressure, and so on and so forth, remotely. We actually saw a bed called the RotoBed that allows patients to sit up on their own without additional help from RCW staff. They're just signing a distribution agreement with a Canadian distributor.

I could go on and on, but I would say, a very effective trip. Again, we followed four provinces there to learn how they take care of their seniors, and that's what we want to do on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Madam Speaker, a question to the Minister of Housing, Land and Communities: Yesterday, the Minister of Environment said, “We intend to look at Maritime Electric and Summerside Electric and see who the ownership should belong to...”

This is coming from a minister who seems to lose windmill blades on a regular basis. I assume the minister responsible for municipalities has discussed this initiative with the City of Summerside.

Future of Summerside Electric

Minister, what is the City’s reaction to these apparent plans to take over Summerside Electric?

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

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

When we talk about the affordability of electricity, we want to look at it right across the board and ensure that every Islander is treated fairly.

[1:35 p.m.]

I am sure that you haven’t done the research, and I am sure that you haven’t read the reports, and I am sure that you won’t, but in the previous iterations of this, Summerside Electric was looked at as well.

If you look at the most recent commissioned report that was done in 2012 by the Ghiz government, the very first page basically says: we’re not interested any further in Summerside electric. But if you’re going to look at who distributes energy on Prince Edward Island, who produces energy on Prince Edward Island, how we can get the best cost benefit to Islanders, we have to include all the electricity. I think it’s only reasonable.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Summerside Electric is owned by the City of Summerside, so I’m not sure why you would try to look into see who the ownership should be of Summerside Electric. I have no idea why. Maybe you should go visit them and find out what they’re doing, because they seem to be doing something right.

That utility that we’re talking about generates a great deal of money for the city of Summerside. I gather a lot of people were surprised by the minister’s remarks about taking it over. I assume the minister in charge of municipalities, has discussed this concept with various MLAs in the Summerside and surrounding areas.

Minister, are they supportive of this move?

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

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

I don’t know what move. We’re commissioning a study – like has been done two different times in the history of Prince Edward Island, one in 1982 and one in 2011/2012 – to look at the future of electricity and what ownership should be. Just because it is one way today, doesn’t mean it can’t be another way tomorrow. It doesn’t mean that a new model can’t benefit Summerside just as much and take some of their own headaches away.

We’re looking at who could own generation. I’ve talked in the House here a number of times about community-owned generation so that the money can stay in communities. I think this would be quite in line for Summersides of the world, who already own generating assets. I’m not sure that, when we go down the road and have an honest conversation with all of the people who are in the mix here, that someone won’t look and say, “I think this is where we belong because I think we can make more money for our communities this way.”

So, you can go ahead and keep fearmongering, because that’s all you guys are capable of doing, but what we’re going to do is what’s best for Islanders.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: I look forward for your government to start doing that.

Grant to Cavendish Farms

Question to the Minister of Economic Development: I've been looking through the minister's budgetary handouts and I see a \$1 million grant provided to Cavendish Farms as an enrichment investment tax credit. I assume, since this expenditure is listed as a grant, that one of the wealthiest families in Canada will not be required to pay this \$1 million back. Is that correct, minister?

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

Hon. G. Arsenault: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We work with all our partners here in Prince Edward Island, all our businesses. We're glad to be able to support and to offer all that we are able to do with our small and local businesses here, and we'll continue to do so. If it's in the form of a grant or in the form of a loan, we're happy to be able to support all those enterprises here in PEI.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you.

I'll assume that is a yes.

Government's attendance at NHL games

Question to the Minister of Fisheries, Tourism, Sport and Culture: We know the minister attended the NHL All-Star Game in Toronto. He handed out lobster sandwiches and other little gifts to people.

Would the minister please tell the House: How much did this little junket cost Islanders?

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

Hon. C. Deagle: I'm not sure which portion he's referring to – myself to travel there? That will be all posted – I'm not sure he's aware, but that'll be posted online when my expenses are posted.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

So, another question for the same minister: I assume the minister watched the game. Minister, who paid for the ticket, and did you have lots of fun?

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

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

As part of this trip, yes, we had a number of tourism staff there. We had an activation site at the Fans Zone, which we put 30,000 people through. Yes, we were at the All-Star Game as a partner of the NHL. We were there as a part of the partnership with the NHL.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Okay, let's keep on with the hockey theme.

Question to the Premier: We know the Premier attended a Leafs game in October 2023. He was photographed with an executive from Grant Thornton. Will the Premier tell the House who paid for that ticket?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Madam Speaker, I'm not sure. I'd have to double check that.

Usually when we go to these places we look after those costs, but I'll have to double check to be sure. I did get taken a shot of on the overhead jumbotron somehow. I don't know how they got the head on there, but it fit on, and lots of people saw it.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

[1:40 p.m.]

Health PEI CEO (further)

Yesterday in the House, a number of the Premier's colleagues were heckling to the effect that the former CEO of Health PEI was a liar. Could you elaborate on the lies your colleagues were referring to, Premier?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Madam Speaker, I'm not familiar with the conversations that were taking place. Those are not words that I have used in here. Maybe you could elaborate more on a question that I could offer more specifics to.

As I've said many times in here, I've worked for three-plus years with the former CEO of Health PEI, we tried to get some things done, and when he retired, I thanked him for his service.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

A question to the Premier: I took a look at an expense report that was filed by the former MLA for District 19, Jamie Fox. According to this report, Mr. Fox charged nearly \$3,000 in mileage in the five weeks before he was forced by the Premier to resign his seat. That's close to \$90 in gas every day. Of course, I assume Mr. Fox needed all this money to campaign for Pierre Poilievre.

Mileage expenses for former MLA

Did this high mileage bill contribute to the Premier's decision to push Mr. Fox out, or was he just part of a larger problem?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Madam Speaker, I'm not sure I know how to answer this question.

I assume that, as a backbench MLA, there is an ability to reclaim some costs from each

caucus. I haven't been a backbench MLA. I don't run the caucus; our caucus has a caucus chair and a Government House Leader who does that. I assume they operate within the *Rules of the Legislative Assembly* because that's who we all answer to. As to the habits of the former MLA from Borden-Kinkora, I'm not sure it's useful for me to comment on it beyond what I have here today, Madam Speaker.

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

R. Henderson: Thanks, Madam Speaker.

A shoreline protection moratorium was put in place by this government back on December 1st, 2022 for any new shoreline protection work done in buffer zones. A legislative committee recommended Islanders should have the ability to protect their property and should be able to implement plans as a group of property owners. Island landowners are still awaiting this moratorium to be lifted so they can protect their properties.

Shoreline protection moratorium

Question to the Minister of Environment: Minister, why are you not wanting Island landowners to protect their property from the ravages of sea level rise?

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

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

We actually do want to, but we want to do it in a responsible fashion. Just like you said, we don't want to have one person be able to do a massive rock job and then have a negative impact on their neighbours because they can't afford to do it, or can't do it, or whatever.

So, we went to UPEI and basically asked them to do a research project for us. They came back with a number of recommendations. We're moving forward, implementing all of them, and in the short term, we're working on shoreline management plans in the 17 littoral zones that were defined.

The very first one actually is in your district; it's Lennox Island, and they're very excited to move forward with their shoreline management plan. We're basically using that as a demo project for how the other 16 will fly. We've asked for federal funding to help. As far as I know, we're going to get it, and we're going to be right back to business.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

R. Henderson: Minister, that's good. I'll say that's somewhat encouraging, but your department had a very good system in place where contractors were provided training to work in buffer zones. These contractors had all the knowledge and up-to-date best practices to do such work as a licensed contractor, which your department licensed, and having to do this with no permits that were required by the landowner.

Why do you feel that these contractors now can't do new shoreline protection work now?

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

Hon. S. Myers: Well, I think because there's a moratorium in place. That's why they can't do it, to answer the question directly.

But it's because, as you may recall, maybe not everybody in this Legislature agrees with what you said, that the system worked, and there were a lot of people talking about the Point Deroche property in particular. What we said in our department was: let's take a pause. Let's have a look at this. Let's get experts to research this.

So, we went out reached out to experts. We have academics studying it because we believe that if we can put on a science-based solution that is something that I, as a politician, can stand behind, versus being accused of hand-picking who gets to do this, or intentionally blocking off beaches, or whatever, that we follow expert advice. That's exactly what we're doing.

We're working as quick as we can to move this file forward. I'm actually quite excited about what we're going to have left.

[1:45 p.m.]

So, there's no move to abandon this if that's what you want. We're sticking to our guns, we think we have the right plan here, and we're just asking for a little bit of patience while we put it together.

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

R. Henderson: But here's the reality that's happening in this situation. Now we're seeing work that's done for upgrades to existing structures by, say, one individual, but then the neighbour next door, who didn't have any particular structures, is not able to do any protection to their own property. So, what you're doing is you're causing another problem in the way your situation is done here.

Minister: Is this fair at all? When will you lift this moratorium? You've had over a year here and we've got nothing done.

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

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

We will lift the moratorium in each littoral zone as the shoreline management plan gets in place. Lennox Island will be the first one lifted. It will be lifted as soon as their plan is in place. We have two more following right on their heels. They'll be lifted right away. I have instructed my staff that all 17 shoreline management plans need to be done as soon as possible so that we can lift it.

What I can say is if you have somebody that you think is being negatively impacted by erosion because of something the neighbour has done, or in cases where we have a neighbour on each side of a property – has shoreline protection and one doesn't, and they think that they're going to lose some of their critical infrastructure, come to us and we will deal with it.

We're not looking to put people under hardship. We want to work with Islanders,

so we will absolutely do what's right by those people.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Question to the Minister of Housing, Land and Communities: In my district, Charlotte Court – which I had brought questions to you before about and talked about sump pumps – they're going through a lot right now because, once again, we find out it's leaking again today. The basement's full of water. There's a serious problem. There's a lake in between these two long-term care – they're not long-term care facilities, but where seniors who you represent live.

Minister, I want you to do something about this issue – investigate it – because the water is coming in and the residents are coming to me. I will table a letter today, as well as pictures from my visit there on Monday.

Public housing repairs and maintenance (further)

Minister: What are you going to do about this situation for my constituents?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing, Land and Communities.

Hon. R. Lantz: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for bringing this to our attention.

We do have staff inquiring about the problem now. The building is privately owned. We do lease units in that building, and we put clients of our department in that building.

We are reaching out on behalf of our clients that live in that building to the property owner to have the issue addressed. If it's a structural or a landscape issue, it should be addressed to prevent water from getting in the basement. I understand it's getting into some storage areas where people keep their belongings.

We'll advocate on behalf of our clients who are tenants in that building.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, minister, because there's mold forming as well, in there.

Question to the Minister of Finance: You said in your budget that it was more of the same, but one of the areas that I don't think should be more of the same is out-of-province health services, which are on the rise.

In '23-24, the government spent more than \$63 million on out-of-province services, but in the current budget, they've only allocated \$53 million in your budget. How can there be a \$10 million projection for next year less than it was this year? It doesn't make sense. It seems like an area we should be spending on.

Out-of-province health care budget

Minister of Finance: Do you find this very strange that we're trying to underspend \$10 million in out-of-province health care services?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. M. McLane: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank the member for the question.

We certainly know that he doesn't have his CA designation, but again, on the budget side, we do have to put a number there that we feel is accurate for the use that it has on out-of-province travel. I believe it was about \$55 million in another year that I looked at.

So, again, we try to estimate what those costs will be in the budget process. It is difficult to estimate who will require service out-of-province, but it's something we do. We're proud of our partnerships, and able to help people get the care that they need.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

G. McNeilly: Well, it's \$53 million in the budget line. So, you don't have your CA, either.

[Interjections]

G. McNeilly: The problem with that is these costs are going up. As the services get less and less on Prince Edward Island, we need more and more support from out-of-province, minister, and you have not budgeted for that. That number will go up.

I'm asking you: Why didn't you have the wherewithal to put that number up where it should be? You're going to overspend. You overspent \$10 million just last year. Why is that number static, and what are you going to do about it? If people need the care that they need off-Island, are you going to be there for them?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

[1:50 p.m.]

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

We certainly won't make any decisions on transporting any patient to PEI based on money. We will always ensure that they get the care that they need. We do feel that that number is appropriate in the budget process, but again, if somebody needs care, we're going to make darn sure that they get the care that they need, wherever they need it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Public outrage surrounding the Point Deroche development continues to this day. The nasty saga seems to get more and more twisted with each passing season. We recently learned that the much-despised development has changed hands again, but exactly who owns it today is far from clear. When privately owned, non-resident companies are holding unusual mortgages and receiving promissory notes for millions of dollars from other private companies, you know that this is not a typical Island land sale.

Recent transfer of Point Deroche

A question to the Minister of Housing, Land and Communities: When this property changed hands recently, why didn't government step in to purchase it and take the opportunity to rectify the problems such as – as the minister just said – the armouring that's blocking the public beach or the building being far too close to the water?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing, Land and Communities.

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

The property changed hands between two private property owners. The transaction came through Executive Council with a recommendation from IRAC, like most land transactions do. It was approved in due course, like any private transaction.

We did not consider purchasing the property because it is a routine transaction between private individuals. I've stated in this House before that, of course, we're all well aware that it's a very controversial property and the armouring that replaced the existing sea wall has certainly galvanized people's attention around this whole issue. I think the Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action did a good job of explaining why the moratorium was put in place as a result of this, the public outcry.

We don't make a practice of purchasing properties. The sea wall was put in place under regulations at the time, the ombudsperson declared it reasonable and within all of the regulations that exist.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks again, Madam Speaker.

As I understand it, even though the property changed hands at Point Deroche, there was no opportunity for government to secure it, return the public beach to Islanders, and move that armouring so that it's doing what it should be doing; namely, protecting critical public infrastructure, not vain mansions built on a public beach.

The most recent deal involved two properties, as the minister just said: the 17.5 acres on which the monstrosity currently sits, and an adjacent piece of land of 47 acres now owned – and I put that in air quotes – by Tim Banks, although it appears that no money has actually changed hands.

To the minister: Is that accurate?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing, Land and Communities.

Hon. R. Lantz: I can only attest to who sold and purchased properties. Yes, those transactions came through Executive Council with a recommendation from IRAC and they were approved in due course, as dozens of transactions are, biweekly, when we process them.

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

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Madam Speaker.

So, as far as we know, Tim Banks hasn't paid any money, and the original owners of Point Deroche – non-residents of Prince Edward Island, let's remember – hold the mortgage for both properties. Both properties: the 17.5-acre parcel that was obviously theirs to sell – the purchase was approved by Cabinet back in September of 2020 – and the larger 47-acre piece that was never owned by them, although they now hold the mortgage that was created in the recent deal with Tim Banks.

Holding the mortgage – and this is critical – is, in the eyes of the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.*, considered the same as owning the land, which, as non-residents, would be a clear violation of the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.*

To the same minister: Why did you let our most important land ownership law get so badly broken like this on your watch?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing, Land and Communities.

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

[1:55 p.m.]

It is the responsibility of IRAC to analyze the ownership of the properties, and that comes presented to us after they've researched that. I don't have any insight into who holds mortgages. The beneficial ownership of corporations that are purchasing properties are analyzed at IRAC, they're analyzed for compliance with the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.*, and forwarded to us with a recommendation.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Just continuing along with this. The 47-acre parcel in Point Deroche that sits next to the smaller parcel with the structure on it was owned for less than two years by Nicholas Jay, who is an Islander but also the main contractor for the Ontario people building the monstrosity, as my friend from New Haven-Rocky Point referred to it as.

Both these parcels were deeded to Mr. Banks' company last December. At the same time, the Ontario people building the monstrosity took a mortgage over both parcels, giving them a beneficial interest in both parcels, even though they never received Cabinet approval to acquire any interest in the 47-acre parcel.

Recent transfer of Point Deroche (further)

My question is to the hon. Premier: Is your government aware that last December, the original Ontario owners of the smaller parcel acquired this beneficial interest in the 47-acre parcel without any approval from Cabinet?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: I thank the hon. member for his question.

Following on the answers that have been provided thus far by the Minister of Housing, Land and Communities, every second Cabinet meeting we get presented with the land transactions from IRAC that go through a process where IRAC goes through each transaction.

They let us know about the ownership structure, they go through a number of different things, and they send it to Cabinet with either an approval or denial attached to it. We would have conversations around the table from time to time about why such property would be denied or approved, for example.

Around this particular issue, it came from IRAC with the approval recommendation, and as the minister said, in due course, Executive Council accepted that approval.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I just want to be clear; we're talking about the 47-acre parcel of land, which is the one in question at the time, presumably been held in trust for the non-residents next door by Nicholas Jay for less than two years now.

It was then deeded to a Tim Banks company just a few months ago, and within a few days of that happening, the Ontario owners of the house next door took a mortgage interest on it without any Cabinet approval. Somehow that happened. This would be in contravention of the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.* Thankfully, it's not too late for the government to do something about this.

My question to the Premier: Will your government intervene and direct IRAC to conduct an investigation into the transactions behind the 47-acre parcel?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the question.

I have to be honest, I'm not familiar with the second part of this. I don't, in my recollection – have seen it at the Executive Council table. I would have to check with staff and IRAC to see. It's not ringing a bell with me at this particular time.

Some of the accusations being made in here, I don't know if they're true or untrue. I would think that it seems to me that there are some accusations being made here that would be pretty troubling.

There are legal processes in place that would have lawyers, et cetera – as the hon. member would know – who would direct their clients on how to do these things within the scope of the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.* But as I say, to my knowledge at least, in my memory, I haven't seen any aspects of this at our Executive Council table.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, your second supplementary.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I will be tabling some documents this afternoon to speak to the statements I'm making.

Islanders need to have confidence that their government is acting and enforcing the laws of our province. Islanders need to have confidence their government's protecting our land, maintaining access to our shorelines and our public beaches. Islanders need to have confidence that the government is working their interests, and not those from away with deep pockets.

My question to the Premier: Will your government intervene on behalf of the people who elected you, and direct that IRAC conduct a second investigation into how the original owners of the Point Deroche property – who are from away – acquired interest in all of this land without Executive Council approval?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[2:00 p.m.]

To that question, first and foremost, I would say that I will follow the rules and laws of this province as laid out and debated and approved by this Legislature, which is what we do. I am not a student of the law like my colleague from Borden-Kinkora is, but part of our duty here is to uphold the law. Sometimes that following the process of the law might be deemed by others to be offensive to what they think is their good nature, or what they believe is right, but we will always follow the law.

I don't direct IRAC. We would have the ability to ask questions back if this were to come to our Cabinet table about the decisions, but there is a process in place. I would, again – some of the language being used in here today sounds very familiar. The Member from New Haven-Rocky Point wanted to – well, went on a tremendous attack against cottagers, he called them then; the Islanders who are here for summer who buy a property.

I would like to think we live in an inclusive place where people can come here and make PEI their home, either permanently or temporarily. Those are the laws of the country. Those are the laws of the province. For this member to suggest that we should lock out non-residents, I think is pretty troubling language, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Winsloe.

Z. Bell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

A little bit of a throwback Thursday. I remember growing up in the late 1980s and the early '90s watching shows like *He-Man* and *G.I. Joe*. Great shows. It's funny, because one commercial that really stuck out with me was aerosol cans, and how that led to the depletion of our ozone layer. That was back in the '80 and the '90s. I was, of course, was just a little bit younger back then. I had a great mullet, followed by a great bowl cut.

I now have conversations with nine-year-old son and my 12-year-old daughter. My 12-year-old daughter mentioned to me about climate change. I wanted to follow that up with a conversation with her. I do know quite a bit about climate change from my role, and I also am going to ask a question to the Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action. I hear about this a little bit on the radio, but again, driving with my younger children, I don't control the dial very often.

Education on climate change

I'm curious as to how the minister responsible advertises, maybe, to the youth in our province about things like climate change.

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

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

We're probably not doing anything. I think the Minister of Education – I think they have a lot of good programs going on. I know I've been invited into classrooms a number of times to talk about our initiatives. The quality of questions that I would get at the grade 6 are absolutely amazing. So, I find that the students are very engaged.

But all that to say: should we be working with the Department of Education to tailor a message that we can deliver via radio or a medium that they would hear or see? Probably, absolutely, we should.

Thank you.

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

Z. Bell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I glad you mentioned that. West Royalty recently did have their science fair. I didn't get a chance to make it this year, but I did get to check out some of the ones online. It was cool to see them trying to adapt some of the – bringing climate into the classroom.

It is great, also, to see their future, having a general grasp of climate and climate change here in the province. We do know that youth will be the future of our Island, and there will probably places like the Clean Tech Park, which is slated to be in the member's district.

Question to the same minister: You referenced about education. I've seen stories on CBC about the Construction Association partnering with the Education department to be in the classroom to help with our housing here in the province. I'm wondering, minister; you mentioned that you have been to grade 6 classes, but does your department have anything to do with any of the classrooms on PEI?

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

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

Yeah, I mean, from time to time – I guess it all depends on the teacher – we would have requests come in. I've always made my staff available. The folks who are in our net zero office are very good to go and talk to classes whenever they're asked. Folks who work on our energy file, they're really good to go out and talk.

We've talked about, are there things that we could do in a classroom? If you go to trade shows, you can sometimes see they used the children's STEM kits to explain hydrogen in there. I was at a trade show in Halifax, and one of the booths was crowded with people as someone was using a STEM set suited for 12-year-olds, producing hydrogen and then turning it back into electricity. Everybody was amazed.

So, we've always said, is there some way we could help partner with Education to maybe purchase those things to go in classrooms, so that teachers would have the type of resources that we might think are important as the future comes around the corner?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[2:05 p.m.]

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

Z. Bell: Thank you again, Madam Speaker.

That is great to hear, actually, because I'm married to a teacher. A lot of times, teachers want to benefit their classrooms as much as possible. I do know that there is tax credit for that, but a lot of times, teachers will go out of pocket to make their experience for their students better.

I'm asking you, minister, if you will commit to maybe working with the Education Department to be able to bring some funding to help try to bring some of these programs to fruition to educate the younger students or younger Islanders about climate change here in the province.

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

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

Yeah, I think that's a great idea. I work with Dr. Farooque quite a bit, out in St. Peter's at the climate lab. We've helped him create some internship opportunities there last year.

This would be with high school students, but he had a group of high school students create a buoy – it was in the news here recently where they had a public release – that would study climate change. They set it out. It had a number of controls and switches in it that they were able to see the currents, the winds, and a number of other attributes that they could study over a long period of time.

So, yeah; I think there are some great ideas in the classroom. We've always talked about, could we create a climate challenge fund for education? That's something I'd gladly talk to the Minister of Education about and see if that's something of interest that we could do together.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

S. Dillon: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

One of the objectives in the mandate letter from the Department of Justice and Public Safety is to design and implement Prince Edward Island's first domestic violence court.

Implementation of domestic violence court

Question to the Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General: Can you update the House on what progress is being made to establish the province's first court dedicated to domestic violence cases?

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

Hon. B. Thompson: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank the member for the question.

This is a great question. When we're in this House, sometimes, we're about negativity.

This is a question about good news; what's happening on our Island right now is our therapeutic court.

In January, we launched our first therapeutic court, which is domestic violence court. It's something that was mandated, you're right, and we're so excited to be able to launch it.

I want to thank the provincial court and Chief Judge Lantz for their support and their partnership in this because it's a different way of looking at our justice. It's a problem-solving approach to our justice system. It's a way of the future, and a way that we want to take our approach going forward.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

S. Dillon: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Domestic and intimate partner violence is hurting our society, damaging people, damaging relationships, damaging families, and damaging our communities.

Question to the Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General: How will this new domestic violence court differ from the traditional court process?

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

Hon. B. Thompson: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank the member for the question.

It's a wraparound service. It's an upstream approach. We have to solve the problems of domestic violence before we can fix domestic violence. It's unfortunate that we have to deal with domestic violence on this Island, but it's here; it's everywhere across this Island. We have to deal with it.

This therapeutic approach, it puts – I went to a court in Halifax. It was one of those times when you see – our whole department went to watch it in Halifax. Sorry, Madam Speaker, if I'm taking too long, here. It's something that's very important to me.

It's a court of second chances. It not only helps the offender to deal with his issues; it helps the victim. With the victim service wrapped around the approach of helping

solve the problems of our society, we're not just incarcerating; we're helping solve the issues.

As we can move forward on this, the better off our Island will be; better for our justice system, better for Islanders as a whole.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

S. Dillon: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This is great to hear, because I honestly believe that we need to work with both parties when it comes to domestic violence. Both parties need to learn to make better choices, because when we know better, we do better.

Creating a domestic violence court on Prince Edward Island has long been a goal championed by many advocates, law enforcement, and court officials. I'm glad to see the progress being made on this important goal by the minister and his department to make it reality.

[2:10 p.m.]

Question to the same minister: Are there plans to establish other therapeutic courts within our province?

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

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

Yeah, it is very important. Thank you for these questions as well. This is phase one of our therapeutic courts. Phase two is going to be mental health. We have to build the resources around that to make sure we have the programming to help. Then our third phase is going to be addictions. We've got to stop just incarcerating people with mental health, people with addictions. We have to have that upstream approach, that wraparound service, before they get to the justice system, so we can help them.

I want to invite the member across to come with me to a domestic violence court,

someday. They're open to the public and we can view that together. I think, going forward, it's great for Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition, final question.

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

We all know that the Premier took a road trip to attend the Winter Classic in Boston, and we know he took two staff with him. We know that he drove through the night to get there after his levy that didn't end until 4:30 p.m. that day. We know that you hid the expenses until after the 2023 election. Yesterday, you said you didn't know why these expenses were buried for four full months.

Premier's attendance at NHL game (further)

Question to the Premier: Have you found out why your expenses from the Boston Winter Classic trip were not filed on time?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. D. King: As I said yesterday, we are obligated to report all of our expenses on a quarterly basis. Around the time of that quarterly filing, of course, there was a provincial election taking place. The government goes into caretaker mode at that point. The minute that the election ended – which, I would say, in an overwhelmingly favourable tone toward our government – the staff completed the filings, and did so as we're obligated to do.

[End of Question Period]