



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
of Prince Edward Island**

**Responses to Questions and  
Oral Question Period**

**(Preliminary Proceedings)**

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

**Wednesday, 30 April 2025**

**No. 19**

**The Honourable Sidney MacEwen, Speaker**

Published by Order of the Legislature



[1:27 p.m.]

[Hon. S. MacEwen in the chair]

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

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

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

The residents of District 15 Brackley-Hunter River have been without a voice in this Legislature since the former Premier stepped down in February of this year. There is no MLA representing them here today, yet a majority of the decisions are being made that directly impact their community. On their behalf, and thanks to the tireless efforts of Nicole Ford, the Liberal candidate in that area, I rise to ask questions Islanders deserve answers to.

Islanders support building more housing, but they also expect open communication and responsible decision making.

**Sleepy Hollow development**

To the Premier: What process did your government follow in deciding to develop 65 acres in Sleepy Hollow, and how were local residents engaged before the decision was made?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

I think I know the development that the member is speaking about, and we've heard some concerns from the community. We're willing to work with the community so that it's a development that everybody can be proud of.

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

**Hon. H. Perry:** Mr. Speaker, Islanders expect proper consultation with major projects concerning land in their neighbourhoods, but that's not happening in District 15.

To the Premier: This is a 65-acre development that could add hundreds of homes, so why are we hearing from dozens of residents who say your government failed to consult or to listen?

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

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

Number one, I guess that's categorically false. We've had a number of feedback come from the community. We've paused the development. We're going back to incorporate the feedback that we've received.

Quite frankly, this is exactly how a government should run. Take note, because when you guys sat over here, you didn't do any of that stuff.

[1:30 p.m.]

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

**Hon. H. Perry:** Lack of communication seems to be a common theme with this government. We heard it yesterday, and we're hearing it again today. This isn't just a transparency issue, it's a land use issue, and this government has earned a failing grade on that for the past six years. This land was active farmland; now it's being converted into residential sprawl.

To the Minister of Agriculture: You're a farmer. Why are you sitting back while farmland is taken out of production to make way for another sprawling development? Doesn't this concern you?

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

**Hon. B. Thompson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for caring about the land on the Island here.

As a farmer myself, yeah, we are concerned about the protection of farmland. It's important to us. As the city of Charlottetown continues to grow, so do the developments. It's a balance here that we have to be very due diligent about. I'll support protecting as much farmland on this Island as possible.

Thank you.

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

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

But the minister doesn't have a good answer – we just heard that – because there really isn't one. How can you claim to defend farmland but then turn around and pave over it?

Question to the Minister of Agriculture: How do you justify reducing PEI's agricultural land base at a time when the loss of farmland is one of the biggest concerns facing Island farmers?

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

**Hon. B. Thompson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member again for the concern about our agricultural land here.

We have over 500,000 acres of farmland on this Island, which is our only natural resource we have here on this Island to supply for our number one industry, our engine of our economy.

We are working with the Minister of Housing, Land and Communities. To protect this farmland, we're coming with LEAR. We've discussed with the Federation of Agriculture. They are excited about this. We're doing a pilot project in Belfast this year – the minister responsible is – and I look forward to how this works to protect all the farmland on this Island.

Thank you.

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

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

Islanders are being asked to support a major public investment but haven't been told what it will cost.

A question to the Premier: What is the total projected cost of the Sleepy Hollow development, including infrastructure, maintenance, and services, and how has that been communicated to the public?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

I want to point out that this property is in the greater Charlottetown area and it has been zoned residential for years. This was a property that we identified at the height of our housing crisis here as a development where we would situate affordable-type homes, that missing middle type of home, where we could provide a product for people to get into the housing market.

We've partnered with construction programs here, with high schools to build tiny homes that

could go on this property. This was a vision to help address part of the housing market that's lacking in this province, and this was something we made a commitment to invest in for that purpose. It's zoned residential, and we'll work with the community so that it's a development that they can be proud of.

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

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

But the issue here is not about building more houses, it's about a sprawling as opposed to a density, which is protecting our land.

Sleepy Hollow Road already has safety concerns, and we know that, and that reaches out into the rural part of Prince Edward Island. It reaches out into District 15 where these questions are coming. So, now this government plans to add hundreds of residents without a clear plan.

To the Premier: Will you commit to upgrading the road, including paving and shoulders, before this development goes ahead? Have residents been given any assurance that this will happen?

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

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

I'm going to try to take a run at correcting all of the misinformation that's being thrown around here. I know the member just keeps going back to his questions because around the halls of government, they said in the 21 days he spent as a Cabinet minister, he was unbriefable, so he's got none of this information in his head.

I will say this: not only is this a piece of land that's in Charlottetown, the roads belong to Charlottetown. The upgrades belong to the City of Charlottetown. We've always worked with them. We just gave them more money in their new arrangement with the City of Charlottetown. They're more than capable of making these decisions.

For us, we followed the process that was laid out in front of us. There was never one time that we didn't follow the process. It's them who hold the public meetings; not us. It's them who receive the feedback, and we've incorporated the feedback into it.

[1:35 p.m.]

While I finish, I might add: Where will the hon. member over there have people live? Where will the hon. member have people live? He's against us taking care of them down at Park Street. He's against us giving them any help. He's against us putting them in houses too, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Hon. H. Perry:** And that's just how this government works. It's blame others and no accountability, no plan moving forward. We just heard this minister stand up and talk about working with communities and that the City of Charlottetown could make their decisions. You don't listen to their decisions. You don't listen to anybody.

We heard that at the AGM on Monday, the one that you weren't at, that there's a lack of communication. You do not listen, just like the rest of you do not listen to any of the Islanders.

Mr. Speaker, transit access is essential for any new development, but we've seen no clear commitment from this government.

To the Premier: Will your government fund expanded public transit to serve Sleepy Hollow or are you downloading that cost onto municipalities?

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

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

You know, the hon. member, the Leader of the Opposition, speaks about public transit. Well, let's take a look at what government brought in public transit here right across the Island, right from tip to tip.

We expanded public transit into our rural communities, and I would point out, yes, I live in a rural community. So does the Leader of the Opposition, but he doesn't seem to care about that. Our public transit is \$2 a trip. We are head and shoulders above every other....

[Interjections]

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I do believe, Mr. Speaker, that I have the floor, if the Leader of the Opposition would stop chirping for a minute.

[Interjections]

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure has the floor, hon. members.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** We are the envy of every other province across Canada when it comes to public transit. Maybe the Leader of the Opposition could take a few lessons from this government that he could have used a number of years ago when he spent that short time in Cabinet.

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

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

These questions could be difficult for some.

In our society, the safety of children must always come first. It is a sacred trust, one that must never be broken.

### Safety of children in schools

Question to the Minister of Education: We've learned of an extremely disturbing incident at an elementary school. Islanders, especially parents, are alarmed. Can the minister clearly outline the process that follows when a report of abuse is made in our schools? From the initial allegations to the laying of formal charges, what exactly happens?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Hon. R. Lantz:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to stand up and say that when Island families send their children to the education system here, our role is to educate them, but the primary fundamental responsibility is to keep them safe. Obviously, in this case, that did not happen.

I want to say how profoundly sorry we are that this occurred. It should not occur. I know that people in the Public Schools Branch are devastated that something like this could occur. We have many safeguards in place to try to prevent things like this from happening. In this case, tragically, those safeguards failed. I'm sure that the minister could outline how.

We will review our processes to make sure that safeguards are as good as they possibly can be, and that our fundamental responsibility to protect the children is as good as it can possibly

be, and that these things do not happen again in the future.

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

**G. McNeilly:** I appreciate the Premier for standing up and saying those words.

Parents send their children to school with trust: trust that their kids will be protected, that their wellbeing is a top priority.

It has come to light that after a student disclosed inappropriate touching by a substitute teacher, the principal informed the Public Schools Branch and was told to hold a meeting with the students, school counsellors, and principals. The notes from that meeting were sent to the PSB. The substitute teacher continued to work, just not with younger grades.

Question to the Minister of Education: How was this allowed to happen?

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

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

This is a horrible, horrendous situation, there's no doubt about it. Any incident that puts our children in danger is completely unacceptable.

I understand people are mad; they want answers. I want answers, as well. I've been briefed on this a number of times, including last night and again this morning. I've instructed staff to engage with the PSB to get myself and our department answers on how this unfolded and occurred.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

[1:40 p.m.]

**G. McNeilly:** Thank you, minister.

Mr. Speaker, we've also learned that school officials never reported the incident to police. Instead, when the family asked whether they should, they were told it was up to them if they thought it was necessary.

Minister, how can you possibly justify putting that burden on the family of the child?

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

**Hon. R. Croucher:** I certainly won't try to justify anything that was just said there. These are serious actions, and they cannot be tolerated in our education system, full stop. They will not be tolerated, moving forward, in our system.

Our responsibility, as the Premier alluded to, is to keep our children safe in our education system and school environment. We need to do better, no exception. I've requested a full review of policy and procedure from the PSB, and I'm asking for that to be immediate and of the utmost importance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**G. McNeilly:** Thank you, minister.

Months passed before the police were informed, and it wasn't until charges were laid that the family was finally contacted by the school.

Minister, how do you explain such an action? How can the PSB and your department justify waiting months while other children may have been at risk?

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

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

Something else that I've requested is the PSB staffing process on how substitutes and other casual staff are assigned to various schools. Again, like everyone else, I want to get to the bottom of this and find out where the errors occurred.

I am fully committed to getting to the bottom of this, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

This individual has since pleaded guilty. We know that international authorities even tried to

extradite him; yet, despite this background, the PSB cleared him to work in a classroom.

What kind of background checks are being done here, which you might have alluded to? Are past employers or foreign jurisdictions contacted at all before a teacher is hired?

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

**Hon. R. Croucher:** We have policies and procedures in place to hire staff. As far as asking for overseas – I missed part of your question, member, but there is a criminal record check component to all of this that the PSB and the Department of Education is not responsible for. That rests with the RCMP, so I cannot really speak too much to that process. I would hope that we can trust in that process when a criminal record check is required.

I will tell you that our registrar has the power to revoke/suspend licences and does so when necessary, but again, I can't speak to the RCMP's criminal record check process.

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

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

Finally, if ever there was a case that calls out for a full, independent review, this could be it, minister.

Question to the minister: Has this case been referred to the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate? Because Islanders deserve to know.

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

**Hon. R. Croucher:** No option is off the table in dealing with this; I will say that. As of right now, it has not been recommended to the Child and Youth Advocate. Whether it will be or not, we'll determine that. It's early days in some sense of this.

Again, member – I believe you know this – I am fully committed to seeing this through, doing the very best for our students and kids in the educational system, and I will make no exceptions other than getting answers to where this went wrong.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Once again, I'm asking questions in this Legislature about PEI's oyster industry.

Minister of Fisheries, you have seen firsthand the losses from oyster mortality some growers are facing, although I will say that some growers are seeing very positive survival numbers when lifting their cages. Yet, for others, it's devastating – maybe as high as 80 percent or higher in mortality.

### Oyster industry (further)

Question to the Minister of Fisheries: I have not seen how these growers can access your \$3 million contingency fund mentioned in the provincial budget. When will you be announcing the application process and what the criteria for eligibility will be so oyster growers can access these dollars? They need their money.

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

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

[1:45 p.m.]

I do thank the other side – of course, Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, O'Leary-Inverness, and New Haven-Rocky Point – for continuing to keep this top of mind because, again, the oyster industry means so much to our province and it is such a tumultuous time right now with a lot of uncertainty.

Hon. member, I have answered that we are continuing to evaluate where that is being done. I know that time is of the essence; I am very aware of that with the fishery starting tomorrow morning. But as I had said, we are going to be looking at this on a case-by-case basis. We've supported the oyster industry before, and we will continue to support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**R. Henderson:** I appreciate the work in evaluating all that stuff, but we've known this for nine or 10 months now. We need to start getting some facts down and try to get this money out to these people.

But minister, what happens as growers are lifting their cages is they're currently finding out some mortality rates are good and some worse. Depending on their mortality rate, some growers want to move their oysters to another lease, as an example. I think that option is a solution here that would help particular growers survive the ability to expand or move their cages or their live oysters to another lease location.

Question to you: What if a grower could convert an existing bottom lease and they could convert it to an off-bottom lease? Minister, shellfish leasing is under your department. It's a co-shared jurisdiction. Could you intervene and create a special circumstance where a grower could convert a bottom lease to an off-bottom lease and continue growing oysters in another location nearby?

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

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

Yes, I am aware that it is a shared responsibility between DFO as well as the Province under the Fisheries department. I will say, at this point in time, that nothing is off the table.

One thing, because we do have to make sure that we are exploring all options. I have talked to my staff. The possible problem with looking into that is maybe it's just putting in an issue further on down the road. That is a possibility, but it is something that I will bring back to my department.

Hon. member, I do appreciate you bringing this idea forward, and I do want to thank all of the members who keep me up to date because, again, I don't have any wharves in District 10 Charlottetown-Winsloe. But I do want to thank all the members because they are hands on the ground, and I know that they receive the calls and the emails and the texts from their constituents.

Again, just to reiterate my point, hon. member, I do want to thank you for your ideas on how we can help all oyster fishers and harvesters here in the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**R. Henderson:** Minister, I appreciate your empathy to the industry, but we have to be flexible here. We have to be able to expedite decisions and get things happening here.

Minister, even if you would make this possibility a temporary situation – and I know you're stating that we might be moving a problem to another location; I mentioned in my question, "nearby." Some leases are just a little farther away and they don't seem to be having the same mortality rates, but it's a bottom lease. If they could convert that to an off-bottom lease, they can expand their operation to at least keep going.

If you're not going to make some decisions quickly, you're going to kill this industry. So, will you do something and have some flexibility to help this industry?

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

**Hon. Z. Bell:** To be fair, hon. member and Mr. Speaker, it is MSX that is hurting the industry. I appreciate what you are bringing forward. I promise to you in this House today, hon. member, that I will bring this to my department in its entirety, everything that you mentioned today, and I will push DFO if this is something that we can expedite to help the industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I've been hearing from residents who live in and around Beach Street and Park Street area. After the Minister of Housing announced that he would be overriding the City of Charlottetown's decision on the location of the Community Outreach Centre and emergency shelter, he announced government would purchase homes in the area. Many residents were left wondering about the process and the plans for this. They've reached out to the department, never heard back, came to me, I passed some names along, and they still have not heard back.

**Park and Beach streets**



Question to the Minister of Housing, Land and Communities: When can people expect to hear back from your department about purchasing their homes, and what will you be telling them?

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

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

I will say, between you and I, I was the only one who was honest with the people down there. You knocked on doors and said, “No, I’m against government,” if they were against government. You went to the next door and if they wanted the outreach centre, you were for the outreach centre.

I will tell you right from the start, I’m with the outreach centre. We’re doing the right thing down there. We’re doing the right thing as a society. We’re doing the right thing for the City of Charlottetown who won’t pick up the thing.

[1:50 p.m.]

We have a process for buying properties in Prince Edward Island. We’re in the middle of it. We have collected all of the people who have reached out so far. If there are more who reach out, then we have a process because as we’re finding out as we go through the budget details here – you guys want to know the most minutiae things that the government spends money on – I am certainly going to take my time and make sure that we spend money the best way possible to buy these houses in the Park Street area.

I’ll tell you something else, Mr. Speaker. The process that we’ve had has been longstanding, and the offer itself has also been longstanding, and it went on before me.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I certainly poked a nerve there, didn’t I?

People are worried and have no idea what this announcement will mean to the future of their neighbourhood because, as I mentioned, the department has not gotten back to them yet. They heard the initial spontaneous announcement and then crickets. This is just like the bottle deposit fiasco all over again.

Question to the minister: Can you please share your long-term plans and vision for this neighbourhood? What will you be doing with the homes you are purchasing, and what is your timeline?

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

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

After two years, the hon. member suddenly cares about her constituents when she didn’t fight for them once when the outreach centre was up by the curling club. When they sat in the gallery, she didn’t even acknowledge that they existed. She wouldn’t even look at them, and suddenly she cares about the people there? She must be smelling an election close by or something. This is what the Greens do. They only care when they care. They don’t care when their constituents actually do care.

I will say, this isn’t a knee-jerk reaction. We already own houses in that area. We’ve owned them for a number of years now. You could drive down there and see for yourself. Government bought them before I ever existed. I don’t know, it might be back to when the member from Kensington was there, I’m not sure. But we already own buildings on that property. We’ll continue to buy buildings on that property. We’ll continue to offer outreach services on that property. We’ll continue to work towards Housing First, like I’ve said here a number of times.

But thankfully, Mr. Speaker, we are finally getting questions about housing.

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

**K. Bernard:** It’s quite a show over there. You bought the houses, but they’ve been empty ever since. (Indistinct) the last....

[Interjections]

**K. Bernard:** You made the announcement, minister.

Over the last couple of years, residents in the area have had various elected and government officials come to their door, often with conflicting messages. The Premier himself once knocked on doors, telling residents, with confidence, that the services would not remain there. They did. The Minister of Housing told

the residents that he would buy their homes. He didn't.

This isn't about the outreach centre, it's about telling Islanders the truth. You bought three buildings years ago and never did anything with them. This is about the new residents since you made your spontaneous announcement.

Question to the Premier: Why should Islanders believe anything your government says when time and time again, your government keeps changing its story and breaking its promises?

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

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

I'll say it one more time: I've never heard you defend your residents over there. I know for a fact that you've gone door to door and you've told people at their door whatever they wanted to hear. If they were against the outreach centre....

[Interjection]

**Hon. S. Myers:** No, if they were against the outreach centre, you were against the outreach centre. If they were for the outreach centre, you were for the outreach centre.

Then you have the gall to come in; you have the gall to come in the House and say: "When are you going to start buying houses?" I said we already have them. You said: "I know you have them; they're empty." Do you even understand how ridiculous you sound? Do you understand how ridiculous you sound? This is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard from one of the most ridiculous members in this House.

[Interjections]

**Speaker:** Hon. member.

**Hon. S. Myers:** I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I will say my integrity is being attacked by this member over here all the time who doesn't have the good graces to ask normal questions to me.

I will say, I think we have a great vision for housing. We had a great vision for housing all along. We've had a great vision for outreach services all along. We've had a great vision for sheltering services here on Prince Edward Island, none of which has ever been happening

on Prince Edward Island. We're doing it at an accelerated timeline like nobody has ever seen before. It's something that I, myself, am super proud of.

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

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

I hope to bring some civility and nobility back to this House. What a performance. Desperate.

On Monday, Islanders, along with all Canadians, observed the National Day of Mourning, a day when we remember workers who have died or suffered injury or illness due to workplace-related incidents.

### Workers compensation

Question to the Minister of Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population: Do you believe that all Island workers deserve to work in the safest possible environment with protections provided through the *Workers Compensation Act* should they be injured or worse?

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

**Hon. J. Redmond:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for this question.

Of course, workplace safety is very important and essential, so yes, I do think that workers should be able to go to work and come home safe.

Thank you.

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

[1:55 p.m.]

**P. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you for that calm and direct answer, minister.

Life is inherently risky, of course, and sadly, despite our best efforts, accidents will inevitably happen. Of course, some activities and some occupations are more dangerous than others, and consequently, they deserve even greater levels of care and protection.

To the same minister: What occupation on Prince Edward Island, according to data, is consistently the most dangerous one?

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

**Hon. J. Redmond:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for this question. I think this is a really important topic that we do need to speak about.

Just for a little bit of information too, the *Workers Compensation Act* currently covers 98 percent of workers in the province. We want people to be able to access coverage and to be safe – primarily to be safe so they would never have to use the coverage, that they would be kept safe when they go to work.

I will bring back data in regards to – from the top to the bottom – where the safety and workplace incidents do occur, but I will always advocate for those going to work to be safe, whether it's from physical illness or from harassment due to emotional attacks.

Thank you so much.

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

**P. Bevan-Baker:** I'll save you a little bit of effort, minister; it's fishing. It's always been fishing. Whether it's on Prince Edward Island or nationally, the numbers are very clear: fishing is the most dangerous occupation you can do, more so than mining, more so than trucking, and more so than construction.

Fishing is the most perilous job because of the environment in which fishers work, of course: on the water, in all weathers, with dangerous equipment. Yet this is the only occupation on Prince Edward Island – and the minister said herself that 98 percent of Islanders are covered under the *Workers Compensation Act*, but not fishers. Everybody else is obligated. If you open a store or do any business, you're obligated to become part of the Workers Compensation Board, but that's not true for fishers.

A question to the same minister: Will you be bringing forward amendments to the *Workers Compensation Act* regulations so that all Island fishers and their families are provided with the same level of care and protection as other Island workers?

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

**Hon. J. Redmond:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again for the further questions.

Certainly, we know that it is not currently mandatory for fishing. It's not mandatory; there are fishers that do take the opportunity to sign in. What I can say right now is we've been actively working with the fishing associations and educating on what it looks like to come on board, because I think there's a big piece of that around the education component. We'll continue to engage and provide information.

We do have officers down there on the docks as well because it's a workplace. It is required to follow occupational health and safety on the ships. They are a workplace. We do have officers there, too, to ensure that, but we will continue to work with the fishing association to continue to talk about the workers compensation opportunities.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**B. Trivers:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

A reliably working harbour at North Rustico is vital to the livelihood and safety of fishers. Yesterday, there were at least 15 boats that were stuck offshore due to dangerous conditions caused by extreme low tides, wind, and an increasingly sand-filled channel – conditions reportedly made worse by delayed dredging and the absence of sea ice to clear the harbour naturally.

### North Rustico Harbour

Question to the Minister of Fisheries, Tourism, Sport and Culture: Will the minister press our old/new federal government to prioritize emergency dredging at North Rustico Harbour before a serious accident occurs?

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

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

I thank the hon. member for the question, and I thank him for his advocacy. It is great being an elected representative here in the province of

PEI because, again, we are a smaller jurisdiction, and as soon as something like that happens, it's within seconds that I hear. It is within seconds that I share my information to everybody to make sure that everybody's on the same page and we can expedite it as quickly as possible.

So, yes, hon. member; every opportunity that I do have with the federal government to advocate for things for Prince Edward Island, I do, and dredging will 100 percent be one of those.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

This minister is a dedicated minister to his portfolio, so I have no doubt he will do that.

But fishers are already being forced to shorten their trips and even redirect to other harbours, risking damage to boats and putting lives at risk, frankly, all while their season is just beginning.

So, a question to the minister: What steps can this government, provincially, take to advocate for proactive dredging schedules, especially in harbours like North Rustico where climate change is clearly altering local conditions?

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

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

[2:00 p.m.]

I do want to kind of mention that it was not only North Rustico yesterday where there were issues. It was also happening in Naufrage, and I believe Milligan's Wharf, in the western end of the province.

Two parts to that as well. It is an unfortunate time. We just had a new moon on the weekend, and the videos that I saw, the tide was extremely low, unfortunately in the time.

I had heard, too, that – I believe it was in North Rustico where the dredger was there in the morning, dredged it so that the boats could get out, and then by the afternoon with the change in the winds, the actual sand had been moved back in.

I will continue to press DFO for the need and the safety. This is something, hon. member, that we have advocated for eons and eons, and we will continue to advocate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

Indeed, North Rustico is not the only harbour on PEI facing the issues. We need long-term solutions. We tried to fix the problem short term, and we've done that for a number of years. Fishers across the Island are raising the alarm about safety concerns tied to changing tides and shifting sands.

Question to the minister: Will this minister and this government prioritize the work with Hazardous Harbour Heath and the rest of the clueless Carney crew to ensure long-term infrastructure funding to adapt our harbours to these new realities?

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

**Hon. Z. Bell:** I do want to thank the hon. member for the question. Of course, the preamble – I appreciated.

I do want to say one thing, too, hon. member. As I'm sure you are aware, DFO is on the shores today just to make sure that everything is operational and safe for the fishers.

I did have my department look into the Liberal platform after the election. Two things that stuck out to me from the fisheries point of view were a recommitment to AFF, which is the Atlantic fisheries fund, but also a 20 percent increase into AFF.

The other thing – and I do want to get information, and I will continue to advocate for it – was a promise of \$250 million for small craft harbours. I understand that that is right across the country, but I can guarantee you, hon. member, I will be advocating strongly for PEI's fair share.

Thank you.

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

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

Today I'd like to focus on the agriculture industry. We know that we now have a new federal government, and in the past, we were fortunate to have a federal Cabinet minister from PEI looking after our agriculture industry, but now, it will probably be somebody new.

### **Agriculture industry**

Question to the Minister of Agriculture: Can you please tell us what your top priorities will be for your first call with whoever the new Agriculture minister will be?

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

**Hon. B. Thompson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question.

Luckily – or not luckily – we have four members here on Prince Edward Island, and maybe one of them can be our next federal minister. I know Kent MacDonald is a great farmer on this Island and would make a great Agriculture minister for this country, so I'll put my plug in for that.

But my first call with whoever that minister is – whether it's Minister Kody Blois or whoever – will be how we need to focus on the supply management because we know that's going to be in the crosshairs of the U.S. administration here when we renegotiate the CUSMA deal. But we've also got to be prepared for these tariffs, and if we increase the business risk management fund, we have to do that across this country, and that would be one of my first calls as well.

Thank you.

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

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

I think we are all waiting to see what this government brings, but I worry that we are in the same fight when it comes to trade and protecting our supply management industries.

Question to the same minister: Have you received any updates recently on the status of trade impacts to our agricultural industry?

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

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

Just last week, the Premier and I had the supply management commodities in the Premier's Office to update the Premier, and we had the dairy farmers, egg producers, and the chicken farmers.

[2:05 p.m.]

Supply management is the envy of the world. Any country in the world that I go to, every farmer wishes they had our supply management system here, and it's something that we have to protect. We know it's going to be part of the negotiations, and all dairy farmers are concerned, all supply management commodities are concerned, but we have to make sure that this longstanding supply management in this country survives because it helps protect our family farms, our small farms, our big farms, and it's a big part of our economy here on the Island.

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

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

You've touched on this. I think we can both agree that our new federal government has a lot of work to do to protect our farmers. The CUSMA agreement is very important to our industry. I'm wondering what you and your department are doing to fight for our supply management industries like dairy, chicken, and the egg farmers so that they can continue to drive our industry and economy.

Question to the same minister: How are you going to continue advocating for our supply management industries in PEI?

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

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

The member is a big advocate of the supply management system too. He made his living off dairy farming, and he's a great supporter of the agriculture industry on this Island. With his support, we'll be advocating for it as well.

When we talk about not having supply management in the U.S. right now, with the avian flu, they're paying \$16 for a dozen eggs in the U.S. Here, with the supply-managed system,

it's affordable. Not only can our farmers get fairly paid, but the consumer gets a fair value for the product as well.

It's important that we continue to fight for supply management. It will be top priority for me, and whoever the new federal minister is will be getting that message as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Just to kind of finalize my question regarding the oyster industry and trying to see what we can do to try to advocate for that industry, I really do appreciate the minister talking about his flexibility in trying to expedite any particular answers. But one of the issues, when we talked about the shellfish leasing board, is that the shellfish leasing board usually only meets about once a month.

#### **Oyster industry (further)**

I think that if you could advocate, minister, to say that that board should meet whenever requests come in to transfer a licence – from bottom to off-bottom, or to move, or whatever the process might be – I think that even would be a big help, since you do have I think three people that sit on that particular board that are your staff.

Thanks.

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

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

I do think that the question was if I can expedite that process if the meetings do take place on one month. I don't know if that is actually the case; I'm assuming the hon. member is correct. If that is the case, I do think that desperate times call for desperate measures. The MSX industry task force meets quite regularly because of the uncertainty and the circumstances, so hon. member, yes; if that's something that can be pushed, I will 100 percent push that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

#### **Sleepy Hollow development (further)**

I asked the Premier this question earlier, about the total projected cost of the Sleepy Hollow development, and I'm going to ask him again: Can he bring that information back that was asked, which would include the total project cost, including infrastructure, maintenance, and services? Can he bring that information back to the House and table it?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

I am not in possession of that information. I could go to the department responsible and see if they have that information that could be brought back to the House.

**Speaker:** Thank you.

[End of Question Period]

#### Point of Order

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

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

I'm just checking that Question Period is over.

**Speaker:** Question Period is over.

**P. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you.

I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Under which rule?

**P. Bevan-Baker:** It is rule 34(2).

**Speaker:** Thank you, member.

**P. Bevan-Baker:** I'll read it out to you: "No member shall use language or words offensive toward the House or any member."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** You're just stating the rule?

**P. Bevan-Baker:** Oh, no. A point of order that the Minister of Housing, Land and Communities used language, in my opinion, that was offensive towards another member of this House.

**Speaker:** Thank you, member. I'll take that under advisement.