



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of Prince Edward Island**

**Responses to Questions and
Oral Question Period**

(Preliminary Proceedings)

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No. 24

The Honourable Sidney MacEwen, Speaker

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[1:25 p.m.]

[Hon. S. MacEwen in the chair]

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

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

U.S. investments

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

I just wanted to rise to respond to questions received yesterday from the Leader of the Opposition on Workers Compensation Board and the U.S. investments.

April 1, as the member is aware, the Minister of Finance tabled these details pertaining to the investments by Workers Compensation Board, and as stated in the previous tabled document: the Workers Compensation Board's accident fund is co-invested with WorkSafeNB in a pooled investment fund. The pooled investment fund has been built up over many years by using highly disciplined, long-term investment strategies for the benefit of Island workers and employers.

I have one more. Is that okay?

Speaker: Go ahead.

UPEI Operations

Hon. J. Redmond: From the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty around UPEI and its operations: the UPEI action plan released in June 2023 was developed with extensive consultations, including an action plan advisory team. This plan identified 400 different actions to be completed over six years. The department continues to review with the university on an ongoing basis.

This week, we received an update which included the year 2 implementation for plan 2025-2026. The information related to the action plan activities and process have all been posted on the UPEI website. As previously discussed in the House, it is important that there is an independent audit to ensure that the action plan is being implemented.

I am looking forward to having the opportunity to discuss the budget further around UPEI when

I make it to the floor. We are pleased with the progress being made and will continue to support post-secondary institutions on PEI to provide high-quality education.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Wastewater treatment

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

This week, I had a question from the Member from New Haven-Rocky Point on the septic system demands, and I brought more information in as I educated myself, as well, on some of the details from my department. I'll share some of it, and table this document so you can have a look at the further information on this topic.

Over the last 25 years, there has been a significant push to upgrade wastewater infrastructure on PEI. Currently, nearly all wastewater facilities on the Island meet or exceed national standards. Upgrades to the system continue to ensure treatment systems can keep pace with development.

Staff monitor systems closely, identifying required upgrades and maintenance issues when required. They meet with utilities as well. The Island's sludge management program is one of the strongest in the country, with the majority of biosolids produced meeting exceptional quality treatment levels. I will give the hon. member more of this information, so I will table this information.

PFAS in drinking water

Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, I'd also like to respond to further information for the Member from O'Leary-Inverness, who yesterday was asking questions on the level of PFAS in the water, specifically in the Ellerslie area.

Staff have confirmed that they did eight other locations in that area and would encourage any member of this House, and the public as well, to have more information – to go to the water registry. That's water.princeedwardisland.ca, and all the information is uploaded. Any other information that will be added to the site will be uploaded as soon as they have the information.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

A question to the Premier.

As far as I can make out, not one single person in the Prince Edward Island education system has had the courage or the decency to take some degree of responsibility for the terrible events in some of our Island schools. Not one single person.

Safety of children in schools (further)

My question: Is this a cover-up? Is no one going to step forward, admit, explain, and pay a penalty?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

[1:30 p.m.]

This is day 4 or day 5 of questioning on this subject. I look around this room, and as far as I'm aware, the vast majority of people in this room are parents. I have apologized to the victims, and the victim's family in this case. We know that something failed in our system.

The case has worked its way through the courts. We've engaged the Honourable David Jenkins to conduct a review to find out if our safeguards failed, or if our safeguards were inadequate, or if our processes, procedures, and our acts, our laws were not followed, or if they were. There are many questions to be answered around this topic, and I'm confident that we're on a path to get the answers that all of us would like to have, that the parents and the victims in this case deserve to have. I am just going to let that process play out, and everyone in this room will have the opportunity to see the results of that review.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

But if this government had acted responsibly, if it held the right people accountable, none of this would have happened. According to CBC this week, there were two separate incidents in Island schools in which the predator, who pleaded guilty, admitted that he victimized more children – three children – but it took a completely separate police investigation before the incidents came to light.

At this time, the Premier, the current minister, and the former Minister of Education all did nothing on it.

My question is to the Premier. Are you so completely incapable of taking responsibility for these massive failures that you continue to make excuses and offer empty apologies?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. R. Lantz: Mr. Speaker, it reminds me of much of the debate that's taking place south of the border about due process. What has happened in the court is the perpetrator of this crime has been held accountable through due process.

There's been no allegation of a crime. The Leader of the Opposition wants somebody to be held accountable without knowing the facts. So, what we have undertaken now is to review our system that is designed to keep children safe in schools. In this case, it failed, seemingly, for some reason. We do not know exactly why and if there's somebody to blame. The Leader of the Opposition seems to be casting blame at somebody, but I don't know who that is yet, if there is anyone to blame. But we have a process to go through to understand exactly what unfolded and that's what we're going to do.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

And it did fail, and this government failed every single child and parent on Prince Edward Island.

So, let me offer a metaphor. If a doctor knows a patient may be sick, they take action. They try to prevent the situation from getting worse and they look for a cure. If a fireman knows that a home is burning, they take action; they answer the call and they often risk their lives. If a policeman is aware of a crime, they respond. They, too, often risk their lives and wellbeing.

All of those are examples of people who take responsibility. In the case of children being victimized, no one in government has taken responsibility.

Yesterday morning, I listened to the head of the Public Schools Branch claim the only person who needs to be held accountable is the criminal. No sense that children needed to be protected. No admission of complete and utter failure by this government.

Question to the Premier: Why has no one been fired, and why isn't this government holding anyone to account?

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

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

I don't know how many more ways we can say this in this House. We have sought out the Honourable David Jenkins to initiate a third-party review, which is underway currently. If there is anyone who needs to be held accountable, that is where that will be determined, once his review is completed.

I don't know what else I can say to that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

So, I read a statement two days ago about ministerial responsibility, and I will quote from it again: "The individual responsibility of the minister requires that he or she be personally responsible for the activities carried out under his or her authority." Now, this is basic political science 101.

Why does the Premier continue to avoid this most basic principle of parliamentary democracy?

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

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

[1:35 p.m.]

As the Minister of Education and Early Years, it is my responsibility. It's my responsibility to keep the children of this province safe in the school system. We have initiated a third-party review to find out where the system fell down. Our department has the full support of the Premier and his office, as well as the rest of this government, to find out where improvements need to be made. Rest assured, when that report is completed, we will introduce any of those recommendations that need to be introduced.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Mr. Speaker, the Premier knew. He knew that these crimes had taken place in his area of authority. He knew this for months, and the failure here was this: he failed to do anything. For months, he sat around and waited for the courts. Meanwhile, damage was spreading, and right now, here's the basic truth: public confidence in the safety of the school system has been badly eroded and is going to take a long, long time and a lot of hard work to build that back.

This happened on the Premier's watch. He knew all about these crimes, and he waited, and he avoided.

I will ask the same question that I did the day before. There seems to be a cover-up here, Premier. How on Earth, with any degree of self-respect, can you allow this to continue with no one taking any responsibility?

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

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

Like I said yesterday and probably the day before, there is no cover-up occurring here. We have done the responsible thing and ordered a third-party review. I'm going to tell you, member, if there's anyone that is willing to put in the hard work to make our system better, it's this side of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Three ministers sat on their hands and allowed this to happen. Three of them. The Premier now has wanted to be the Premier for 10 years. I'm asking you questions. You're in the House now; I'm asking you questions.

Premier, I asked you this question on Tuesday. I asked you again today; you avoided it. I asked you another question today; you avoided it. How on Earth, with any degree of self-respect, can you allow this to continue with no one taking responsibility? Premier, why do you continue to avoid this most basic principle of parliamentary democracy?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

As the Leader of the Opposition knows, I became Minister of Education in October of 2024. This was at least two months after the charges in this case were announced – charges that were initially unrelated to what happened in the schools.

I can assure the Leader of the Opposition, when I became Minister of Education, the process of reviewing what happened here was well underway to provide further training to staff at the Public Schools Branch. I can assure you that we did not want to do anything to jeopardize the case that was being made in the courts against this individual.

We know the statement of facts that have been agreed to in the court. Those facts are known, but there are still questions that we need answers to. We need answers on this side of the House. They need answers on that side of the House. The families of school children in this province need answers.

We are undertaking a process to do that now, and I'm confident in this process that we're undertaking. We'll share the results of that review with the public in Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

They did absolutely nothing to protect every child and parent of Prince Edward Island. Parents need answers. That's why we're asking these questions. Parents need answers; they're not getting answers from anybody over there.

Question to the Minister of Education: We know the interviews took place in 2023 and 2024. In the latter, a father and a child made their concerns known to the school. Minister, was Matthew Craswell also interviewed?

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

Hon. R. Croucher: I'm going to summarize this in one statement: the opposition on this side of the House is on a witch hunt for political gain. This side of the House – our department, the Premier's office – we are on a fact-finding mission because the truth matters. That's exactly why a third-party review was ordered and initiated.

[1:40 p.m.]

Member, I can't speak to 2023 at this point in time, but I assure you, at the end of this review, I will be able to, and I will bring that to this House. I will bring that to the public, and we will move forward in a better light.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

We've said this – I've stood up many times: shame on you for trying to deflect your responsibility and trying to put it on someone else.

These are questions that Islanders need answers to. You, your previous Minister of Education, and the one prior to that sat on their hands – sat on your hands – for over a year with this information and did absolutely nothing.

Question to the Minister of Social Development.

We know the duty to report was not followed. For anyone who may not be familiar, here is how it works: The duty to report is a legal obligation that we all share. If any Islander has reasonable grounds to believe a child needs protection, they are required to report it. This is a responsibility for every citizen. It's a good law because it makes it crystal clear: protecting children is everyone's responsibility. In this case, that duty was not upheld.

Will the minister please tell this House whether she considers this an offence against the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* which she is in charge of?

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

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

Yes, everybody is responsible with a duty to report, and the event was reported.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Minister, minister: Do you consider this an offence against the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*?

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

Hon. B. Ramsay: No, Mr. Speaker, it's not.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: I can't even touch that one today.

Just to underline how serious this law is, Mr. Speaker, I will summarize a portion of the offences section, which is section 62 of the act: Any person who fails to report to the director of child protection or a police officer faces certain penalties.

Has the minister explored whether an offence may have taken place?

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

Hon. B. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and if you can indulge me for a moment, in a case like this, the provincial child sexual abuse protocol is implemented when someone suspects child abuse. Child Protection Services can only act on its own when they are notified that a child may be in need of protection from a parent or a primary caregiver.

In a situation where another enforcement agency has been notified in an investigation of

suspected child abuse by a person who is not a parent or a primary caregiver, Child Protection Services offers its assistance to that agency in the investigation and will assist if requested.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Again, I can't even respond. This minister does not know her own department. She is not taking any responsibility for this. No one on that side of the floor is taking any responsibility for this, yet parents and students are still out there in a vulnerable situation. Something needs to happen. Somebody needs to take some kind of responsibility for what happened.

The penalty section of this act says the following: Any person who fails to report is "liable on summary conviction of a fine not exceeding \$10,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or to both a fine and imprisonment."

This is a very, very serious matter. Will the minister please tell this House whether she believes this case represents a failure in duty to report? If so, what is being done about it?

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

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

All of that will be determined in the third-party review that has been initiated.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Again, Mr. Speaker, if this had been done and the government had acted responsibly, we wouldn't be here today asking these questions.

This entire situation has shown a system-wide failure to fulfill the most basic expectation of our education system, which is protecting the safety of our children. A monster was permitted to inappropriately touch multiple children across multiple schools, and the only thing done was to move him from one grade to another. No

responsibility taken; no accountability to be found.

In an interview with the director of the PSB, that was illustrated in that. She refused to accept responsibility despite this entire situation playing out inside....

[Interjection]

Hon. H. Perry: She refused to accept responsibility despite the entire situation....

[Interjection]

[1:45 p.m.]

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor, hon. members.

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

She refused to accept responsibility despite this entire situation playing out inside the system that she was charged with managing.

I also want to compliment Nicola MacLeod for her pointed questions on the need for accountability.

Question to the Minister of Education: Will you finally do one thing right and immediately terminate the director of the Public Schools Branch?

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

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

The Leader of the Opposition is taking a pretty dangerous tone.

We have initiated a third-party review – I'll go so far as to call it an investigation – and what comes out of that investigation, we will look at and we will implement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I just got information from one of your constituents, a minister over there. She asked

good questions, and I want to ask them here on the floor of the Leg.

She said: "Our children's safety cannot be treated as an afterthought or a process-improvement opportunity after harm has occurred. I expect to see firm commitments, new legislation, or policy changes province-wide if necessary, and full transparency from every level of leadership, including your office. What is being done now to ensure that this never happens again? This needs to happen immediately."

Safety of children in schools (further)

She goes on to say: "I have no peace of mind that an organization responsible for children in the province has the safeguard or oversight in place to protect them from the abuse. As a mother who works full time, what are my options? How can I get peace of mind that I am sending my daughter somewhere she will be safe?"

That's a question to the Minister of Education.

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

Hon. R. Croucher: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the individual that sent the question.

Student safety is of the utmost importance to our department and this government. The system – it fell down. We are taking the steps. What is happening immediately? It's happening now. A third-party review. That is underway as we speak. When that third-party review is finalized and the recommendations come out of it, we will implement any and all policies that we need to, to protect our students.

And I would just like to say that both our school authorities are collaborating and cooperating with our department and this government every step of the way. I would like to also thank all of the educators out there that are watching this and that are dealing with this right alongside of us. That goes for the parents as well.

Thank you.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you very much.

She goes on to say that she doesn't want vague reassurances, but it's up in the air for what that is right now.

On May 1st, I sent a letter to the Minister of Education requesting a detailed list of information related to the acts that took place in our public school system, and they were disturbing. I asked that the information be provided no later than today. Parents, teachers, and the entire community deserve answers now.

Question to the minister: Will you be tabling that information today in the Legislature?

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

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

I did have a briefing on that letter this morning, member, and as everyone in this House can appreciate, 100 percent of our department's focus has been on getting this third-party review underway immediately. There are a few things within that letter that you asked for that are taking a little extra time. I assure you that the response to that is coming soon, but not today, member.

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

G. McNeilly: There's some information that we need in that letter, minister. You said it's not coming today. I asked for it to be back today. This is what transparency looks like. I gave you a week. There's important information in there, minister.

When will you table that response on the floor of the Legislature for all of Prince Edward Island to see the timeline that's occurred in this?

Hon. R. Croucher: Again, I will state that 100 percent of our focus was on immediately taking action on this horrific event, which we have done and continue to do. It's been 100 percent of the focus of our department. There are a lot of things within your letter that I want to address as well and want answers to. As soon as we get them, it will be tabled here in this House.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[1:50 p.m.]

The Minister of Social Development – who, I will remind the House, is also responsible for child protection – stated in the House that she would table the child sexual abuse protocol. I certainly hope she will not be tabling the publicly available document that was created in 2013 and is in desperate need of updates.

Safety of children in schools (further)

Question to the Minister of Social Development: You were notified of this case eight months ago. I don't want to see a protocol; I want to see a progress report. Will you table a report of progress your department has made in closing the gaps in child safety that were identified through the Matthew Craswell case?

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

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

Yes, we were notified in August by the RCMP, and we will collaborate with them in any capacity that we can. And anything that we need – if they want to do interviews, we will sit in on those interviews. I gave my protocol yesterday. I told you what the protocol was, and that's exactly what it is.

[Interjection]

Hon. B. Ramsay: I told you that was the protocol on the floor yesterday, but I do have the document to table today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: There's a lot to unpack there.

Yesterday, you told us that it was too long. You couldn't go through the protocol because there was too much, so we're going to table the protocol. What I'm saying is I googled the protocol. It is available online. I printed it off; I have it. I would like a progress report, but the language that you're using, like "We will, we will, we will," suggests to me there's been no progress made on this file.

Training and protocols are meaningless if they are not enforced and followed.

Question to the same minister: What mandatory training on the duty to report and child protection legislation is currently in place for senior officials and directors across government departments, and how often is compliance with that training audited?

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

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

We are regularly out training different departments and organizations on duty to report. In fact, we just did the Legislature here last week.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

K. Bernard: Mr. Speaker, that was....

A child's rights impact assessment, or CRIA, is a tool designed to help officials identify and consider all potential direct or indirect effects that a proposed law, policy, program, or other initiative can have on children. Back in 2021, this Legislative Assembly unanimously passed a motion calling on government to develop, and share publicly, a CRIA tool to be used in all policy and legislative development within government.

Question to the Minister of Social Development: A child's rights impact assessment could have been a proactive approach to ensuring school policies regarding situations like this one have clearly communicated protocols. Why, after four years, does it appear there's been no movement towards implementing this tool?

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

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

I will go back to the department and find out why that hasn't been, or maybe that work has already begun.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last October, the Auditor General released a very concerning report on executive salaries at Health PEI. Islanders were assured that executive salaries would be reduced back to approved levels, and going forward, executives would be paid appropriately. Now we find out during budget debate that many of the current executives are paid through independent contractor agreements, which may again circumvent approved Public Service Commission salary ranges.

Health PEI leadership (further)

Question to the Minister of Health: Minister, will you provide complete transparency for Islanders by tabling all current contracts or payment arrangements for every Health PEI leadership position, including independent contractor agreements and employment agency agreements?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

You're right. Our current CEO certainly walked into a very uncomfortable situation when our former CEO circumvented Treasury Board policy rules, Public Service Commission rules, and then every rule that we had within government in order to make this happen.

I'm very happy that Melanie didn't turn her car around and drive back home, to be quite honest with you, and I think her work over the last year has certainly stood on its own. There are 7,000 employees in the health care system, over 400 professions. We need an executive leadership team to run that for Islanders, and that's what we've been doing for the past year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The government continues to blame the past CEO as well as the past Liberal government.

[1:55 p.m.]

Between the last two fiscal years, salaries within the CEO office went up about \$1 million. This fiscal year's salaries are budgeted to go up

another half a million dollars. This is on top of the \$8 million increase to professional services in the CEO office last year. Unfortunately, trust has been broken with Islanders, and now the only way to rebuild that trust is with transparency and accountability.

Question to the Minister of Health: Islanders' access to health care is not improving. Do you think, minister, perhaps it's because you're investing millions into bureaucracy when almost every frontline health care worker is being underpaid compared with our neighbouring provinces?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I'm very proud of the successes that the executive leadership team has done. There was a letter actually sent up to staff from our CEO in the last couple of days. Obviously, the opposition doesn't have a copy of it, but I'll just – alternative level of care in our hospitals has decreased about 13 percent. We have hired 1,269 positions in the last year. We've affiliated 2,554 Islanders with a primary care provider. We've hired 61 out of 65 nurses at our UPEI program. Our ER wait times during the first quarter of 2025 were the lowest in two years.

This group that we have, that runs a \$1.2 billion health care system, is making improvements.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

M. MacFarlane: One statistic the minister forgot was 37,000 Islanders waiting for access to a family doctor. We were told during budget debate that several of our current executive positions are being paid through employment agencies such as Odgers. It was confirmed that although the contract with Odgers did go to Treasury Board, the amount associated with the contract isn't in line with Auditor General's recommendations because the AG recommendations were for employment contracts.

Question to the minister: Can you understand why Islanders are concerned that the same outcome – that is, executives continuing to be overpaid – is happening again, just with a different approach? What are we paying these

agencies to fill our executive leadership positions?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Back to my first answer, obviously, the former CEO placed us in a very difficult position with what he did with those employees. We've had to make changes in that ELT structure. I think everybody in this House would agree that some of those changes needed to be done. Our former CEO has publicly admitted to doing wrongdoing in what he did. We need to run our health care system. People that run a 7,000-person organization don't exist on every corner on PEI, so we brought in some talent.

I really like our new chief of HR. We've had unions come out and talk about how good communication has increased since she took on that position. We are professionalizing that ELT team, and I'm very proud of the last year's work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

B. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Working with the PEI ATV Federation, government has taken significant steps to promote safe and responsible off-highway vehicle use – for example, through the introduction of annual registration for ATVs. This new system provides sustainable funding for trail maintenance, while ensuring riders are insured and compliant with safety requirements.

Off-highway vehicles (further)

Question to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure: Can the minister explain how the Province is working with the ATV Federation to ensure the annual registration system is meeting its goals of enhancing trail safety and supporting local trail development?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

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

Before I get directly to answering the question, I also want to thank the hon. member for the motion that he will be bringing forward later this afternoon, and for a discussion on that.

Certainly, with regard to the annual registration fee: that was initiated upon the request of the ATV Federation, and it was just another step in the great relationship that our government and my department has been able to develop with the ATV Federation.

As we move forward, with regard to pilot roads, with regard to a tip-to-tip trail, all of this requires partnership and collaboration between the ATV Federation, my department, and our government.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

B. Trivers: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Safety is top of mind when it comes to ATV use on the Island. Many Islanders, both riders and residents, have questions about how enforcement will be handled under the recently implemented annual registration system, especially in areas without local policing or formal trail patrols.

Question to the minister: What enforcement mechanisms are currently in place to ensure compliance with trail permits and annual registration requirements, particularly in rural and unincorporated areas?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. E. Hudson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again, an excellent question from the member.

[2:00 p.m.]

One of the things, as I'm sure that the member is aware of, is that moving forward, we are looking at a share the road initiative, which will be brought forward in the hon. member's motion that he will be bringing forward.

But it comes down to, as I said, the partnership between the federation, my department, our government, but the partnerships that are required are certainly much broader than that. You look at the collaboration that is going on

presently, and has gone on, regarding the Share the Road initiative; collaboration between my department, the ATV Federation, law enforcement agencies, municipalities, and I could go on.

But it does come down to working together. That's our goal, and that's what we'll continue to do.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

B. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his great work on this file.

The effectiveness of the Share the Road initiative and expanded ATV access depends in part on having legislation that enables clear, enforceable, and flexible rules.

Question to the minister: What specific changes to the *Off-Highway Vehicle Act* are being considered to support structured, community-led ATV access, and when can we expect to see amendments introduced in this Legislature?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

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

As far as when we can expect those changes to legislation to the *Off-Highway Vehicle Act* to be introduced into the Legislature, it will be this coming fall.

Presently, as I had mentioned in my previous answer, we have and are continuing on with that collaboration and receiving feedback from municipalities, from law enforcement.

One thing that I do want to stress here, though, is that on this – like right across the board – this government, my department, will not be forcing this upon any municipality. It's going to be up to individual municipalities whether they want to participate in this or not. But for the municipalities that do, the one thing that we want to make absolutely sure of is that the legislation and the regulations make this a safe process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

T. DesRoches: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today is a busy day right across the Island, and it's not just because it's McHappy Day. As you may have noticed, Mr. Speaker, when you put your other hat on, you might have seen some large cargo ships coming across the horizon when you're out on the water. Today is the first day that the windmill components are going to be unloaded in Georgetown.

Windmill expansion project

Question to the Minister of Environment and Climate Action: Minister, with all of the loading of windmill components for the windmill expansion project – this is a large project of \$82 million – can you tell us what this project consists of?

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

Hon. G. Arsenault: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, hon. member, for the question.

To be fair, it's actually an \$86 million project, so we're going up in price. To divide that up, we will have \$47 million in purchasing of that equipment. We also have a breakdown of \$15 million for the civil work including turbine foundation, roads, anything that's around that work; over \$9 million in land transport and turbine installation; and also, substation, the electrical work, for \$7 million.

We are spending \$86 million on the project and the hon. member is correct that they will start to be seeing traffic on the road for unloading these turbines in the Georgetown area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

T. DesRoches: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, that's great. There are a lot of large numbers – \$9 million for infrastructure in the ground and whatnot.

Let's go back to that same minister.

Minister, this is a pretty large bill; a lot of public tax dollars being spent. I recently learned that it was tendered as one large project to an off-

Island company and that no Island companies are going to have any part in it, that they're taking everybody in. There was a possibility of a security company from the Island getting some work, but that hasn't been confirmed.

Minister, can you confirm that this is a project that is being funded with an off-Island company doing all the work?

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

Hon. G. Arsenault: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[2:05 p.m.]

We do go by an RFP process. It was an open process, and the hon. member is correct that part of the work has been awarded to Penco; it's a Newfoundland company that will be doing most of the work. But we also have Island companies that have been hired through this company.

For example, the iron workers of PEI will have some work through this project that we're looking at. We also have a variety of different companies. I do have here – because I was searching through my notes; if you want to indulge – the different companies that we have in PEI that will be involved in making this a reality:

We do have the engineering consulting and project management going to Frontier Power Systems, which is an Island company. We also have EastTech Engineering, and CBCL road design. We do have civil construction that has implications in this project. We do have the Island Pulp Producers for the land clearing. We also have the Chapman's company with road construction. We have National Port Security Services with on-site security and GSD powerline install.

There are more to come, as well, because not all the project work was awarded yet. So, we will have direct financial implications for Island companies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

T. DesRoches: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess I shouldn't have given the minister too much of a heads up; he had his notes done.

Back to that same minister: Well, minister, you did your homework. I guess I shouldn't have given you a heads up. That's great that there are some Island companies getting it, but there were a lot of Island companies left out.

Minister, I'm sure this won't be the last expansion of a wind farm; this won't be the last large project that your department takes on. Can you tell this House today that you will try to make sure there are contingencies in place, that Island companies will get a piece of this so taxpaying dollars can stay on our Island and go farther?

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

Hon. G. Arsenaault: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, I did have notes ready because I'm involved in the project and we do have everything on hand. We're working on this as we speak, as the ships and the vessels are getting into the port starting today, right up to the time that we unload everything. So, I do have those numbers in front of me because we're directly involved.

It's an open RFP process that we were engaged in. We will continue to follow the process that we have when we do major projects. I'm very proud of the process and the work that the Energy Corporation has done, and the people who are working at the Energy Corporation, with their involvement in this project.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the Minister of Education regarding similar questions that were talked about today. I'm representing a Charlottetown riding. There was information about a different Charlottetown school. We know that a school in Stratford was involved.

Safety of children in schools (further)

Question to the minister: Which was the Charlottetown school that was involved in this case?

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

Hon. R. Croucher: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to defer that question. I'll bring it back when I determine that, legally, I can do so.

Thank you.

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

G. McNeilly: I don't know when that's coming back. That's important information.

Again, I read a message from a mother and I asked similar questions yesterday. It's coming back here again today.

What specific changes are being implemented immediately to prevent another child from being placed in harm's way? I'm not talking about a review. I'm talking about the immediate, right now, from K to grade 2 or grade 6 – whatever you would like to choose, especially for our younger people. What's being done right now?

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

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

Again, I want to give a shout-out to all of the educators in our schools right across the entire system, across the entire province. These educators are affected in very similar ways to the parents that you're representing and speaking for, and the children. Everyone right now – I assure you, member – is hypervigilant, hyperfocused on the wellbeing of our children in our system. That goes for their mental and their physical wellbeing. I can assure you that everyone is paying attention right now, member.

Thank you.

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

G. McNeilly: I, too, would like to give a shout-out to all our teachers out in Prince Edward Island. But the problem is we've been asking these questions. They want to know – these are their questions. These are coming from parents,

and it's not just one; it's hundreds of parents asking the same things. It's very simple.

[2:10 p.m.]

Minister, what are we looking at in the immediate to keep our children safe? What changes are being done? This file is yours.

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

Hon. R. Croucher: Mr. Speaker, I am fully aware that there is some anxiety around this. There are questions. There are concerns.

Yesterday, I heard about the 100 messages that came to the Leader of the Opposition. I'm hearing today that there are a number of messages coming to you, Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, and I'm going to say here, right now: Anyone – anyone – that has any questions or concerns, or wants to talk, reach out to my department and I will respond directly to each and every one of them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[End of Question Period]