

CUPE PEI’s analysis of the Government of PEI’s 2024-2025 Operating Budget

Increase the real wages of workers who provide public services

Because wage decisions in interest arbitrations have not kept up with inflation, good wages in the public sector workers have retention benefits and benefit the overall PEI economy.

What we asked for:	What the Budget says:	CUPE PEI’s Questions and Comments
<p style="color: #C85130;">Increase the real wages of workers who provide public services</p>	<p>Improving our Recruitment of Healthcare Professionals - \$6.2M</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to implement new financial recruitment incentives, support relocation programs, streamline hiring practices and hire more recruitment staff. 	<p>Do recruitment incentives and plans include raising base wages for workers?</p> <p>Does “healthcare professionals” mean ALL workers in the healthcare system, or just “Doctors, Nurses, RTs, and Allied Health Professionals?”</p>
	<p>Adding More Front-line Staff to our Education System - \$7M</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To add more front-line staff to our education system, such as teachers, school counselors, educational assistants, youth workers and bus drivers. 	<p>While adding more staff can help with individual workload issues, members are struggling to afford the basic necessities of life. What steps is the government taking to make wages sustainable for those already IN the system?</p>
	<p>Moving towards parity in long-term care - \$4.5M</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support moving towards wage parity between private community care and long-term care homes relative to government-owned facilities. This investment will help increase wages for all non-management staff in these facilities including RNs, LPNs, RCWs, PCWs, program support, cooks, housekeeping and maintenance. 	<p>While private long-term care workers deserve immediate wage increases, “parity” with the public system is not enough. How will the province address the low wages in the sector as a whole? When will the government address the concerns of CUPE PEI regarding privately administered and delivered long-term care?</p>

CUPE PEI's analysis of the Government of PEI's 2024-2025 Operating Budget

<p>Give the 2022 Recruitment and Retention bonus to CUPE workers in healthcare</p>	<p>No mention of including CUPE members in the recruitment and retention bonus.</p>	<p>These bonuses were offered to many classifications in health but neglected many hardworking CUPE members. This exclusion was a slap in the face to our workers who kept our province safe during COVID and have also been working short, working overtime, and going the extra mile every day for Islanders.</p>
<p>Free tuition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification and upgrading • Recruitment and retention aide 	<p>Training and Upskilling More RCWs, LPNs, Paramedics and RNs - \$2.2M</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To continue to create upskilling opportunities for LPNs to become RNs, provide bridging programs for internationally educated nurses, support advance care paramedics working to full scope with critically ill patients, as well as continue to train more RCWs, LPNs, Paramedics and RNs on PEI. 	<p>CUPE PEI is happy to see this recommendation around upskilling in action as we have been asking for it for years. However, we would like to see training/upskilling opportunities for all CUPE classifications.</p> <p>Tuition fees in post-secondary institutions are a barrier to a future public sector workforce. We would like to see guaranteed funding/spots for all programs that prepare people for public sector jobs.</p>
<p>Real investment in the CUPE wage grids will help recruit and retain workers and make life affordable for our healthcare heroes. Providing free education that qualifies people for public service jobs also helps sustain the workforce!</p>		

CUPE PEI’s analysis of the Government of PEI’s 2024-2025 Operating Budget

Implement new childcare spaces that are publicly-owned and operated

Because all working families with children need access to childcare and the government should ensure that barriers are removed for parents.

What we asked for:	What the Budget says:	CUPE PEI’s Questions and Comments
Replicate the ‘seamless’ model of childcare being piloted in BC, which places childcare in public schools	Growing Childcare Supports and Spaces - \$4.3M <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve access to childcare for families, continue the implementation of \$10/day childcare and provide supports for operators to create more childcare spaces, with a commitment of 30 percent of new spaces for infants. 	Is the government reviewing its assets and considering more accessible public options for childcare? Is the government investing any money in providing affordable, quality public childcare for families? Or are they just going to invest in private operations?
Expanded/flexible hours for parents who work outside ‘regular’ hours	Introducing a PEI Children’s Benefit - \$1.1M <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To introduce a new monthly benefit starting in January 2025, for an annual investment of \$4.4 million to help families with costs associated with their children. 	This money may help alleviate some childcare costs for families but does not address access issues for those who work irregular shifts.
Improvements to wages and working conditions for ECEs and all childcare staff	No mention of the government providing additional financial support for wages and working conditions of ECEs.	ECEs do not make a living wage on PEI (the median is \$18/hour ¹). If ECEs and other childcare providers can’t make a living in their career, they will leave.

Government can guarantee quality childcare standards and sustainable working conditions by making childcare publicly owned and operated.

¹ <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketreport/wages-occupation/5189/PE;jsessionid=1AA8FEB5FE5794B56B4141A4900FE43C.jobsearch76>

CUPE PEI's analysis of the Government of PEI's 2024-2025 Operating Budget

Address the housing shortage and make housing a human right

Because "Affordable" rental housing units are not actually accessible to the average Islander

What we asked for:	What the Budget says:	CUPE PEI's Questions and Comments
<p style="color: #0070C0;">Invest in publicly owned housing</p>	<p>Growing our Inventory of Affordable Units - \$10M</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To launch the Community Housing Expansion program to create new affordable housing units and keep existing affordable units in the housing market by collaborating with non-profits and co-operatives. <p>Supports for Social Housing- \$1.6M</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide funding for the PEI Housing Corporation to operate newly constructed or acquired housing units. <p>Tax rebates for market housing - \$6.7M To provide HST and property tax rebates for newly constructed multi-unit residential buildings.</p>	<p style="color: #0070C0;">This money doesn't go toward publicly owned housing.</p> <p>CUPE PEI is pleased to see investments in social housing. Also, we know that investments in non-profit and co-operative housing are more prudent because the goal is housing, not profits. However, we are concerned that the government continues to see the private sector as a partner for affordable housing. As long as housing is tied to the markets, there will be little improvements for Islanders.</p>
<p style="color: #0070C0;">Define 'affordability' by income percentage</p>	<p>Tax Rebates for Builders - \$6.7M</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide tax rebates for newly constructed multi-unit residential buildings, including rebates of HST and property tax rebates through the Residential Unit Development Incentive program that provides financial support to encourage the development of new rental units. 	<p>Incentivizing multi-unit builds may create more units in the market, but there are no guarantees that those units will be affordable or accessible.</p>
<p>Subsidizing private contractors is expensive and risky. Publicly owned housing is how the Government can help control rent prices and ensure that all people have a safe, affordable place to live.</p>		

CUPE PEI’s analysis of the Government of PEI’s 2024-2025 Operating Budget

Expand pilot project of the Targeted Basic Income Guarantee (T-BIG)

Because the pilot project has been in place since 2021 and it should be improved upon to address poverty on Prince Edward Island.

What we asked for:	What the Budget says:	CUPE PEI’s Questions and Comments
<p style="color: green;">The pilot project should be made permanent and be available to everyone who falls below the market-basket measure for poverty.</p>	<p>There is no mention of the Targeted Basic Income Guarantee (T-BIG) in the budget address.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> However, T-BIG works by providing existing social assistance and AccessAbility support program recipients a top-up that brings them to 85% of the market basket measure, and they will be allocating funds to those programs (see below). <p>Improving supports for social assistance and AccessAbility support clients - \$3.1M</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the annualization of the increase to Social Assistance and Accessibility Support clients. Funding is also provided for a review of the AccessAbility Support program. 	<p style="color: green;">The Government is tackling poverty through a variety of “band-aid” programs instead of looking at the problem as a whole. Instead of expanding income supports, they will change tax brackets, introduce a provincial children’s benefit and provide a grant for free heat pumps.</p> <p>When will the government provide a progress report for the T-BIG pilot project and can Islanders expect an expansion of that project to address poverty?</p>
<p>Eradicating poverty is a guaranteed approach to both care for each other as Islanders and alleviate the pressures on our public system.</p>		

CUPE PEI’s analysis of the Government of PEI’s 2024-2025 Operating Budget

Make new investments in public services

Because public services go a long way to make life more affordable for everyone.

What we asked for:	What the Budget says:	CUPE PEI’s Questions and Comments
CUPE PEI urges the Government not to repeat the mistakes of other provincial Governments who are permitting private clinics to perform more surgeries— privatization will worsen public hospital staffing shortages that cause longer waits.	<p>The Government is making significant investments in healthcare, as mentioned above. The majority of the budget address is focused on healthcare.</p> <p>However, CUPE PEI has concerns with the following two announcements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health innovation projects - \$9.1M Launching a low-interest financing option for operators to create more long-term care in the system. 	<p>The “health innovation projects” are ill defined and are tagged as “find[ing] new ways for Islanders to get the care they want and deserve” and they use Pharmacy Plus and Virtual Hallways as examples of past projects. This is a signal that the government will fund more private healthcare projects instead of focusing on solidifying and expanding public healthcare.</p> <p>In terms of financing operators of long-term care, is there money allocated to increase public long-term care beds, or is the government focusing on opening private community care and long-term care facilities?</p>
Improve rural transit and make T3 Transit public	Adding public transit routes and keeping fares affordable - \$1M	Though we are pleased to see further investments in transit on the Island, CUPE PEI would like to see the province consider a fully public, cross-island service when their 10-year plan is launched (consultations happened in January and February 2024).
CUPE PEI recommends that the Government institute a publicly owned electricity system and focus on providing universal access to energy.	There is no mention of public ownership of energy production and distribution in the budget.	<p>As of March 1, Islanders will have endured a 9% increase in energy costs since May 2023. Those rate increases are set by Maritime Electric, a private company.</p> <p>The energy minister for PEI has now called for the development of a report to look at the cost of bringing Maritime Electric in-house and making it a public utility. CUPE PEI will watch the developments on this file closely.</p>
The public sector is an important part of the Island’s economy. By investing in public jobs and public services, everyone wins!		