

Official Opposition Budget Submission 2020-2021 Operating Budget Priorities (revised post COVID)

As per our House Leader discussions, please find below the Office of the Official Opposition's 2020-2021 Operating Budget Priorities. When preparing these priorities, the Opposition caucus intentionally excluded budget commitments that have already been made by the government, either through announcements or Throne Speech commitments.

COVID-19 has also highlighted a critical need for investment and consideration of additional and new supports designed to safeguard Islanders' health, PEI's economy, and our vital supply lines.

With these in mind, we expect government to demonstrate its commitment to the implementation of an Island-wide school food program; to make significant progress on access to high-speed internet for rural Islanders; and to implement improved policies on local procurement. We also expect significant investments in climate change and decarbonization programs and activities; mental health and addictions services for Islanders; expanded efforts to recruit and retain health professionals; funding for long term care staff; additional, and improved, affordable access to home supports for vulnerable Islanders and our elders; and new public housing through the PEI Housing Corporation.

Table of Official Opposition Requests 2020/21 Operating Budget			
	ITEM	2020/21 AMT	RECURRING
1	Social Sector Community Partners core funding	\$2,000,000	3 year
2	Community Sector Network	\$250,000	3 year
3	Vital Signs	\$112,500	4 year
4	Early Childhood Educators Wages	\$1,000,000	ongoing
5	Best Start worker salaries	\$150,000	ongoing
6	PEI Literacy Alliance core funding	\$200,000	5 year
7	Crop Study	\$100,000	one-time
8	Agricultural Sector Council	\$60,000	ongoing
9	Addictions Navigator	\$75,000	ongoing
10	Dental Coverage for seniors and low income Islanders	\$2,500,000	ongoing
11	Pollinator Expansion	\$1,000,000	ongoing
	TOTAL	\$7,447,500	

BRIEFING NOTES on LINE ITEMS

1 Social Sector Community Partners - core funding / increase to existing funding

Revenue for NGO operations usually comes from various sources, including contracts with social services, user or member fees, donations and fundraising, which have been and will be severely impacted by COVID this year and in the long term. Organizations may also have project-based funding which is usually restricted to very specific activities and outcomes, and can not be used for core staff salaries or operational overhead / expenses.

A commitment to multi-year core funding would provide for reliable and sustainable staffing, and enable long-term planning, reducing the risk of program and service interruption from these essential organizations to the community they serve. All of these organizations are established nonprofits or charities, with board of directors and a track record of fiscal accountability with the province. Where agreements are already in place for project-based funding, it is recommended that core funds would be provided in addition to project funds.

Please refer to Appendix for social sector organizations and estimated financial requirements. We are requesting an investment of up to \$2 million to support the 29 community organizations in the social services sector.

2 Community Sector Network

Background: Discussions for this core operational and program funding were at contract stage in December 2019 with five departments on board, however it was not approved by the Treasury Board for the original 2020/21 budget.

On PEI, the non-profit sector is recognized as the third-largest economic sector. The sector has more employees than aerospace, bioscience and IT combined. This sector provides access to thousands of critical services and programs in areas such as social services, environment, health, education, employment, arts & culture, sport & recreation, and more. The Community Sector Network of PEI represents more than 1,000 non-profit organizations, 6,000 staff, and about 53,000 volunteers. Recently, the board of directors of the Community Sector Network of PEI announced success in establishing the non-profit sector as an incorporated organization, with a vision to having a vibrant, valued, and collaborative community sector for PEI.

We request that core operational funding of \$250,000 per year for three years be provided to the Community Sector Network of PEI to enable this essential organization to fulfil its mandate as the organization representing the third sector in the province.

3 Vital Signs

In 2019, the Community Foundation of PEI and the UPEI Institute of Island Studies produced Vital Signs, a report that measures the vitality of the province in areas such as housing, health and wellbeing, and education. The report provides the public with an arm's length and holistic view of how the province is performing and can also be used to inform public policy on PEI.

We request that, for the next three years, \$112,500 be provided annually to the Community Foundation and the Institute of Island Studies to complete an annual edition of the Vital Signs report.

4 Early Childhood Educators Wages

A child's early years are some of the most important years in their life. However, low wages for early childhood educators continue to undermine stability and growth in the early childhood education sector. Without a competitive salary scale, the profession is not valued, and workers cannot be recruited or retained. Additionally, workforce challenges mean vacant spaces cannot be filled and new spaces cannot be created.

We request a \$1,000,000 investment in ECE wages in 2020-2021, with the goal of achieving wage parity with educational assistants by 2023.

5 Best Start Workers Wages

In the 2019-2020 budget, the Province allocated \$150,000 to the Best Start Program on top of the \$1.28M in base funding. We request the continuation of the \$150,000 increase.

6 PEI Literacy Alliance core funding

Low literacy can have a profound impact on a person's ability to participate fully in their community. On PEI, low literacy affects 45% of people, and 40% of Island children starting school are not fully ready for learning to read and write.

The PEI Literacy Alliance is a long-established organization that works to address literacy issues on PEI. Its programs are impactful, cost effective, and Island-wide. The Alliance's work directly complements the work of the Province; in fact, the Province and the Alliance have worked together as literacy partners since the Alliance was founded in 1990.

For the Alliance to continue to deliver and expand its free programs, it needs Provincial operational funding that is adequate, predictable and stable. We request operational funding of \$200,000 per year over the next five years to expand the services of the PEI Literacy Alliance.

7 Crop Study

As Prince Edward Island continues to feel the increasing effects of climate change, it is essential that the provincial government work with farmers to ensure the future sustainability and economic viability of Island agriculture. In keeping with Recommendation #1 from the UPEI Climate Lab's 2017 recommendations for climate change adaptation, the Office of the Official Opposition is requesting that the provincial government commit \$100,000 toward the commissioning of a comprehensive study that assesses the ongoing viability of current crops and identifies potential new crops suitable for the Island's changing climate conditions over the next thirty years.¹

¹ An extensive overview of this recommendation can be found on page 21 of the Climate Lab's 2017 report. http://projects.upei.ca/climate/files/2018/10/PEI-Climate-Change-Adaptation-Recommendations-Report_medres.pdf

A comprehensive crop study from a respected independent institution will be a fundamental part of any broader consideration of the future sustainability of agriculture in the province. Additionally, any modelling work conducted for the purpose of the study will also be useful in assessing the impact of climate change on the Island's forests.

8 Agriculture Sector Council Funding

In 2015, the PEI Government cut funding to PEI sector councils, including the Agriculture Sector Council. This decision has hindered labourforce development. For example, the Agriculture Sector Council provides funding to cover the cost of obtaining a class 3 license, which is required to drive the machinery used to harvest and store crops. This year, with the current funding and limitations at JVI locations and staffing, there was only 1 location and one truck available for the training. They could only fund 2 offerings with 3 drivers each. This is substantially less than in previous years:

2017 - 4 offerings - 24 Drivers

2018 - 4 offerings - 21 Drivers

2019 - 2 offerings - 6 Drivers

Prior to 2015 cuts, the Agriculture Sector Council could cover the full costs of the training for farmers. Now, farmers must pay 50% of the costs. This can create stress for a farm if it loses a licensed employee. At best, they are now responsible for training a new employee; at worst, they will be unable to harvest and store their crops, resulting in financial losses.

We request increased funding of \$60,000 to the Agriculture Sector Council to support the training of Island farmers, especially with respect to class 3 license training. We also recommend a review of current funding for other sector councils.

9 Addictions Navigator

While it is encouraging that an overhaul of mental health and addictions services is underway here in PEI, this process will take years to complete. Government must consider what can be done presently to support those in the recovery process through every stage in their personal healing journey.

We request the creation of an Addictions Navigator who would assist Islanders in accessing the appropriate addictions services and ensure continuity of care. The Navigator would also report regularly to the Department on any identified barriers or gaps in the PEI addictions system and provide input toward potential solutions.

10 Dental Coverage for seniors and low income Islanders

Dental health is an important part of a person's overall health. While approximately 70% of Islanders have dental insurance, many Islanders do not have access to the dental healthcare services they need. Low-income workers may not have access to dental plans at work, and seniors may not have access to plans as a result of retirement or a lack of income.

Currently, there is \$2.8M budgeted for provincial dental programs, which include children's dental care, the preventative orthodontic program, the long-term care facilities dental program and the cleft palate orthodontic treatment funding program. We request \$2.5M in additional funding to extend dental care

coverage to seniors and low-income Islanders with no private dental insurance coverage. This coverage would include extractions, fillings and annual preventative appointments.

11 **Pollinator Expansion**

While the province's native bee population provides a significant percentage of agricultural pollination services in Prince Edward Island, local bee colonies are not sufficient to meet all of the needs of Island growers and processors. As a result, each year the agricultural industry imports bees from other provinces - a practice which exposes local beekeepers to the potential introduction of the small hive beetle (SHB), an invasive species that has caused significant damage to native colonies in other provinces.

To eliminate this risk, the Office of the Official Opposition is requesting that the Department of Land and Agriculture invest \$1,000,000 to assist Island beekeepers in increasing the province's bee population by at least 3,000 hives in order to meet 100% of domestic pollination demand. This funding, which could be administered through the existing Pollinator Expansion Project, would cover relevant expenses for equipment, training, labour, bee materials, and hive transportation. This funding would be delivered using a combination of grants and loans.

Social Sector Community Partners: Supplement to Official Opposition Budget Submission 2020

What would basic core funding include to allow basic provision of mandated services without any other external supports?

- A full time salary (\$50k) and a part time salary (\$25k) plus operational overhead (\$50k rent / lights / internet / website / phones) plus \$25k for program delivery - \$150k
- If organization is already in receipt of funding, then **additional** funds should be provided to make up for \$ lost from fundraising / community events (average \$50k)
- Total ask is \$2 million to allow for funds to be allocated to organizations where no information was available / not on list in addition to those identified; all estimates are based on publicly available information

	Organization	2019-20 budget	Additional funding \$	Notes on existing funding agreements and estimates provided
1	Bedford MacDonald House	\$343,300	n/a	Current budget amount includes operational and project \$
2	Big Brothers Big Sisters of PEI	\$29,100	\$150,000	Current funding is for project-based activity only
3	Blooming House	\$60,300	\$150,000	Current funding is short-term only
4	Boys & Girls Club of PEI	\$11,600	\$150,000	Current funding is for project-based activity only
5	Camp Gencheff	\$29,500	\$100,000	
6	Catholic Family Services	\$95,100	\$50,000	
7	Community Connections	\$2,185,600	n/a	Not enough information available to assess need
8	Community Inclusions	\$871,400	n/a	Not enough information available to assess need
9	Family Services PEI	\$86,700	\$50,000	Project funding for counselling services programming
10	Harbourview Training Centre	\$255,500	n/a	Not enough information available to assess need
11	Inclusions East	\$1,204,500	n/a	Not enough information available to assess need
12	Pat & the Elephant	\$154,400	\$150,000	Includes fee for services not core; previous ask from OOO included an annual \$150k in addition to fee for service

13	PEERS Alliance	\$0	\$150,000	Does not receive any financial support currently
14	PEI Association for Community Living	\$41,300	\$100,000	
15	PEI Citizens Advocacy	\$22,100	\$50,000	
16	PEI Council for People with Disabilities	\$130,200	\$100,000	Current funding pays for community access dept (3 staff) who bring in CCP-D benefits - \$1.2m to community last year
17	Family Services PEI	\$86,700	\$50,000	
18	PEI Family Violence Prevention Services	\$679,900	\$50,000	
19	PEI Federation of Foster Families	\$156,800	\$50,000	
20	PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre	\$291,000	\$50,000	
21	Queens County Residential Services	\$4,740,000	n/a	Not enough information available to assess need
22	Salvation Army Fuel Program	\$136,200	\$50,000	
23	Souris Group Home Association	\$272,200	n/a	Not enough information available to assess need
24	Stars for Life Foundation	\$155,900	\$50,000	
25	Transportation West	\$82,200	\$50,000	
26	Tremploy Inc	\$505,500	\$100,000	Building needs to be expanded and additional programming added; funds would allow for professional services / planning to be done
27	Canadian Mental Health Association			Not enough information available to assess need
28	Alzheimer Society of PEI Ltd	\$31,100	\$50,000	
29	Spinal Cord Injury PEI Inc	\$24,500	\$50,000	