# Second OPINION

## Tories go from BOLD TO BLAH

My, how the PC government has changed.

The administration that once wore its unorthodox approach to governance like a badge of honour is now a shadow of its former self. Gone is vision. Gone is courage. Gone is the energy to push files forward. All replaced with less transparency and accountability.

Heck, on many days it seems like the King/Lantz government has given up trying. What was once bold is now blah, a safe zone where timid politicians hide from big decisions.

There is no better example than Gilles Arsenault's complete capitulation to intimidation from Maritime Electric not to rock its monopoly on energy.

The provincial government hired an accounting firm to conduct an energy system review, and the firm delivered what was expected – a salute to the status quo.

That's all Arsenault needed to support the utility's plan to spend upwards of half a billion dollars on diesel powered combustion turbines to backstop our energy supply. The plan changed at the last minute from three new units, to two used and one new. Maritime Electric has offered no insight on if short term savings of buying used will result in long term extra costs. Not what you want with a take it or leave it offer.

We should leave it.

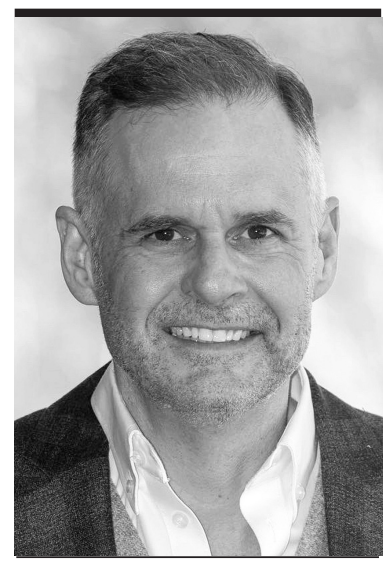
A former Tory Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action once pushed PEI to look globally for energy alternatives, including community-controlled micro grids.

Those bold ideas and big thinking are long gone. Today Arsenault and the Tory government are tying our energy future to the hip of NB Power with an expensive plan that will make our NetZero goals more difficult to achieve.

On the low bar of delivering the expected, the energy review met its mark. It lacks vision and fails to ask basic questions, especially around an Independent Energy System Operator.

Nova Scotia is establishing one. Ontario already has. The goal is the same. Shop around for the best energy options at the best price.

Our review didn't even look at the potential of PEI partnering with Nova Scotia, it simply said a new Island entity could result in costs greater than potential benefit. It dismissed the notion of establishing a full-blown public utility as cost prohibitive. It is



**Paul MacNeill**

*Against the Tide*

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largely silent on the inherent conflict of a single operator controlling all components of energy generation and distribution.

This may be what the PEI government wants to hear, but it does not make for policy in the public interest.

Public trust in our electrical system is eroding, but we don't need a fully public system to rebuild it.

Here's why an IESO is imperative.

It was learned late last week that building new cable capacity to connect PEI to both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick electrical grids is one of 32 potential Canadian mega projects the federal government is examining. Because it is the only PEI project on the list and it includes benefit to our neighbours the likelihood of approval is high.

This level of potential capacity expansion would be a game-changer. But the lack of public discussion raises a question of how Maritime Electric has manoeuvred its solution as a decision of extreme urgency. Why didn't the energy review examine the potential of partnering with Nova Scotia?

Pick any area of government and the PCs are being led by the hand by the bureaucracy, corporate partners, or both. It should be the reverse.

In health we've barely made a dent in the patient registry, but the minister talks as if the system is roaring back to life.

Our students went back to school last week with no change in leadership at the Public Schools Branch despite the crisis created by the conviction of substitute teacher Matthew Craswell.

In a systematic collapse of accountability, it is unconscionable that PSB leadership is still in place. Island children, teachers and parents are all forced to wait while the premier and minister of education dawdle and do nothing when everyone knows trust in PSB leadership is irreparably broken.

Senior leadership of Tourism PEI is motivated by self-interest and driven by arrogance that is massively wasteful and not in the best interest of this province.

The Lantz government declared Housing First as a policy and then immediately did nothing to put meat on the bones of this foundational program needed to ease homelessness. Rhetoric over action.

We claim to be a leader in eliminating interprovincial trade barriers, but delay making those changes law, an appeasement to special interest groups.

Add it up and the PC government is getting long in the tooth, which is not an environment any future leader hopes to inherit.

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# Our SPACE *Eastern Graphic Staff*

*Kyle Cotton*

### Out of touch with Islanders

Former Green Party candidate Darcie Lanthier had the courage to do what most Islanders were thinking at the public meeting run by Brad Trivers at the library in Charlottetown, as he was discussing his proposed changes to the PEI Residential Tenancy Act.

The middle finger heard across the Island, directed at Trivers, came after his arguments for mostly giving landlords more power when PEI is constantly at or near the bottom in the country when it comes to vacancy rates. In fact, according to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, PEI's vacancy rate was at 0.9 as of October of last year, which ranks as the lowest in Canada.

His plan involves things like introducing a new way to increase rent higher than what is currently allowed year after year, bringing down the amount of time landlords need to give tenants to leave after being evicted, and bringing rent costs up to "fair market value" once a tenant has left.

First of all, most landlords are not victims in any sense of the word, yet that is the picture that is being painted.

In 2025, there aren't many landlords complaining that they can't find a tenant, yet there are hundreds, maybe thousands of hopeful renters being ousted by ridiculous price gouging as supply and demand rises for housing.

If a landlord isn't making money from a rental property then sell it. Hundreds of thousands of dollars will be in the bank account. Problem solved.

Landlords hold all the power and while yes, tenants from hell do exist, for every bad tenant there are 100 good ones who are just trying to have an affordable roof over their heads.

It's clear Trivers is out of touch with Islanders. It's not like he's living in a big metropolis, this is PEI. He sees just how much Islanders are struggling each and every day when it comes to housing. Especially since he was housing minister.

Despite that, he wants to make it easier for landlords to control their tenants.

***Kyle Cotton***

*Josh Lewis*

### New year, new scrutiny

A new school year is underway on PEI, under the cloud of ongoing fallout from the Matthew Craswell sexual touching affair.

There were major problems in the school system before this came to light, but the horror of the allegations and the PSB's attempts at spin in the aftermath have focused minds in a hurry.

The PSB has pledged a new central reporting system and strengthened hiring practices, but isn't committing to more until the publication of a third-party report, which might not be here till 2026.

Lots of parents are rightfully concerned for their children's safety, or at the very least wondering how soon they would be informed if a predator was found to be working in their school.

With Craswell's sentencing still to come and a new charge added, this story won't leave the public consciousness anytime soon.

Parents and school communities are also demanding action on bullying, a pervasive issue that has never been given the attention or seriousness it deserves by PEI education authorities.

When I was in school, the buzz phrase was "hands off," as if physical altercations are the only form of bullying. Today it's "no tolerance."

The experience of families in Kinkora and across the Island show it is being tolerated, and that needs to end.

Bullying can impact someone's life long into adulthood. Not being believed or being brushed off only makes it worse, especially when the parents of the bully are not willing to take responsibility.

There are also families with special needs students who feel their children are being frozen out of the regular school experience, seemingly because schools feel they are too difficult to deal with.

Running a province-wide school system that meets everyone's needs is difficult. But it's obvious the PSB has a lot of work to do.

***Josh Lewis***