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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

WEDNESDAY, 13 DECEMBER 2017

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Increasingly, communities and jurisdictions are turning to more innovative methods to improve access to health care. Last spring, for example, I put forward the idea of establishing a mobile mental health crisis team here on PEI and that included tabling a petition calling for the creation of a mobile mental health crisis team.

Establishment of a mobile mental health crisis team

Question to the Premier: Premier, can you update the House on what progress has been made, to date, on establishing a mobile mental health crisis team here on PEI?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, our staff are looking at all kinds of different models to make sure that we can provide services to Islanders when it comes to mental health and addictions types of issues.

We are also in a contract situation with the Canadian Mental Health Association to develop a suicide prevention strategy. We are, once again, awaiting for a physician to come from out-of-country to practice here, who has some specialty in mobile crisis teams' concepts.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The out-of-country health professional that the minister is speaking of, I can only assume this is the health care professional that the minister had said, many months ago,

that was actually here on the Island, when he wasn't even out of his home country, yet.

Mobile mental health teams are made up of a mix of health and law enforcement professionals that work together to provide collaborative services. Currently, all other Atlantic Provinces use this type of service to better focus community mental health services and I think Islanders could benefit tremendously from this type of service.

Approval of funding for mental health crisis team

Question, again, to the Premier: Has there been any funds approved, to date, towards establishing a mobile mental health crisis team here on PEI?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, as I had mentioned earlier, our department is aware of the concept of a mobile mental health team. We have staff that have looked at the concept and we're exploring options on how to deliver it. Once again, deal with the budgetary issues as we move forward in the next fiscal year. We need to get a concept. We need to get a plan that makes sense and that's going to work for Islanders.

We are also working with the Canadian Mental Health Association in developing a suicide prevention strategy, as well, Mr. Speaker, that's specific to Prince Edward Island.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

That answer, basically, says: no, there are no funds identified for a mobile mental health crisis team here on PEI.

Health PEI's latest annual report highlights that only 34% of youth clients are seeing community mental health services within

current access standards being 70%. That 70% is a benchmark and we're at 34%.

Expected timeline for mental health crisis team

Question to the Premier: What is the expected timeline to have a mobile mental health crisis team up and running here on PEI?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, as I had mentioned earlier, that, once again, as a department, we are working on a plan to deal with that. We are also working to get some expertise on the subject. We have a physician, a psychiatrist that's coming to Prince Edward Island. At the moment the individual is having some struggles with their visa, but we're hopeful that that's going to be corrected in the very near future.

When we have that individual here, we'll be able to take a look and correlate the whole program and plan and commence the concept of implementation and the budgetary process to follow-up with that.

I do reiterate, we do work with a number of providers. We work in the hub model. Individuals have certain specific issues and needs, we have a collaborative approach to deal with that, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Again, this minister speaks about the out-of-country psychiatrist that is being recruited to PEI and the last we have heard from this individual is that he was actually waiting to find out the exact details around the small business tax changes from the federal government because if they are as severe as he feels that they will be – and many health care professionals feel they will be – then he will not be coming to PEI.

There are no easy answers to improving access to health services, but I think it's

important that we keep looking at options that may be considered outside the box by some.

Innovative approaches in health care

Again, question to the Premier: Do you agree with me that more innovative approaches are needed in health care delivery to get better results?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think we all understand that there's lots of room for innovation, lots of room for working together in a collaborative fashion. Let me mention three initiatives that have, in fact, offered services out-of-hospital – if that's a way of talking about mobile service. One is the walk-in clinics, now at five locations: Lennox Island, O'Leary, Westisle, Summerside, Charlottetown, could be further offerings of open seven days a week. More than 600 Islanders have benefitted from that.

We have the Seniors Mental Health Resource Team that's offering service to some seniors at home in community care and long-term care settings, the services of the transition unit, which enables people to be treated for addiction services without needing to be in an institution.

We are offering service to hundreds of Islanders in innovative ways and, of course, there's more to be done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier just said that there is much more to be done and I couldn't agree more with that statement. In fact, some of the initiatives that the Premier spoke of are not,

in fact, new initiatives; they've been around for quite some time.

One of the big road blocks to improved health care delivery is access and many communities and provinces are coming at that problem in unique ways. In Saskatchewan, for example, a mobile primary health care clinic is used with a vision of providing mobile services. This initiative creates more healthy equity and closes the disparity gap for people who are geographically, socially, economically, and are culturally isolated.

Mobile primary health care clinic

Question, again, to the Premier: Has your government looked at this model of health delivery to supplement existing services?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I just want to be sure that people in the House and beyond appreciate the extent of new effort, new resources, collaboration, and innovation that are being put forward to service the needs of Prince Edward Islanders in the area of mental health. You have the school resource units that are in place now in Westisle and Montague and they're actually being responsive to the needs in a multi-disciplinary and collaborative way and those are new with a view to be in all of the families of schools.

There was an expansion of the transition unit from 10 to 18 beds in the past year. The Mental Health Resource Team, in fact, has expanded to King's County. So there are expansions in the efforts that we're making and we appreciate what these professionals are doing and we appreciate the service they're offering to Prince Edward Islanders with mental health needs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Again, the Premier talks about some initiatives that are, in fact, not new. He talks about some initiatives that are actually not meeting the needs of Islanders.

A mobile treatment venue is very proactive. It brings the services right to the location that needs it. We're seeing time and time again where emergency rooms are being closed for reasons that there are no doctors available. These mobile clinics could actually backfill those occurrences. This venue, combined with a trained team, would enhance access to services within the community itself.

Again, question to the Premier: Do you think that approaches like mobile mental health crisis teams and a mobile primary health clinic could help reduce the overcrowding and long waits in our emergency rooms and walk-in clinics?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member, we do have services all across Prince Edward Island. It's very rare that we would have one service in one location. Even if I take our women's wellness centre, we have a base of operations at the Prince County Hospital. We've already provided services all across Prince Edward Island for access to those types of services, which can include mental health issues around postpartum depression and the like.

When it comes to our mental health walk-in clinics – they're all over Prince Edward Island in different locations and these are new initiatives. If I even take our student wellbeing teams – these are new initiatives that were created in September. We certainly are cognizant of the issues around mental health and we're working hard to try to address the needs of mental health for Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Each year in the spring children preparing to enter kindergarten undergo what's known as an early years' evaluation.

Performance of early years' evaluations

Question to the education minister: Who performs these early years' evaluation? Is it the kindergarten teacher, or someone else?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: Hon. member, the answer to that question, simply put, would be it would be somebody else. But you're correct, there is a number of different programs that are available for students that are in the early years and going into kindergarten and we're expanding upon those resources as we speak, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my understanding that these evaluations are done by teaching professionals, hired by the province.

Dollars spent on early years' assessments

Question to the education minister: How much does the province spend each year on these assessments?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I don't have the exact number as to what's spent on those assessments in each year, but I can say that those assessments are a very important tool to ensure that students coming into the system are met and addressed in terms of determining where needs may lie and resources at the classroom

level are allocated based on those meetings on an annual basis. It's a very important service overall to students that are coming in so that we might be able to determine what's required at the classroom level in each ensuing year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These tests assess incoming kindergarten students to find out if they need extra help in the form of early intervention when they enter the classroom.

Kindergarten teacher and assessments

Question to the minister: What role does the kindergarten teacher play in these assessments?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, hon. member, the kindergarten teacher does not play a role in the actual assessment that's taking place, but what does happen is that when the student comes into the kindergarten teacher's classroom, there is a piece where that kindergarten teacher would have training that would allow them to help to identify certain needs that might exist with that student and they work in partnership with the other folks at the school level, such as: special needs teachers, or resource teachers, or administrators, to determine what needs a child might have and to do their level best to ensure that they're addressed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not an education expert, but it would seem to me that a teacher that's going to work with a student for the next year probably has a role to play in the process.

Timeline of evaluation shared with parents

Question to the minister: When is information from these evaluations shared with parents?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I guess the first thing that I should say is that when these assessments are conducted, the class composition is not determined – and that's a big part of the reason that these assessments are conducted is to determine what the classroom composition would look like from one class to the next and it all factors in.

I should say that as the children are going through those assessments, there is an interaction with parents that have children in them. In terms of the exact timing or formal reporting being given, I do not have the exact detail, but again, I can see if I can get that.

I will assure the member that – and I know this on a practical level, that I can tell you from having met with a number of constituents where certain issues were picked up on with a particular child and that was identified with the parent right away.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've heard of situations where the results of the evaluation aren't shared with parents until after the student has started kindergarten.

Question to the minister: How can it be called early intervention if parents don't get the results of pre-kindergarten student evaluation until after their child enters kindergarten?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure, hon. member, that we're talking the same thing here, but each student would undergo an assessment before they go into school, which would be kindergarten, to determine what issues might arise, their preparedness for kindergarten and that sort of a thing. Beyond that, when the student gets into the classroom there can be further interventions for assessments that might take place over the course of that student's education and they can have a range from something involving a learning disability to, as an example, a student that's struggling in reading and having to go through reading recovery or some testing relating to that.

So, I'm not exactly sure what testing you're asking me about, but I'd be happy to see what I can do to address that if you want to specify further.

Thank you, hon. member.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, it's the early years education testing. If you don't get the results until after your child enters kindergarten that would seem to run counter to the idea of early intervention.

Early years' evaluation sharing with parents

Question to the minister: How much information from that early year's evaluation is shared with parents?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member, again, is correct and again the testing is done to determine preparedness for kindergarten, and parents do participate with the student in that testing. So, I would say, as with a lot of different things, the level of information that the parent gets depends on their participation in the process, and probably, in all honesty, in the individual assessor. We have to look at again, what the purpose of this is for. If it's an ordinary student with no issues, there's not a large report that's prepared to report on that student's preparedness for kindergarten. They would go into kindergarten in the normal course of things.

We're looking at a program that helps students to get lined up for success, kindergarten and on, and that's the purpose of this program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I understand that this evaluation uses a rating system of red, green, and yellow to assess the student on a series of key benchmarks. Sometimes families want more detailed information of where their child stands.

Access of evaluation of child

Question to the minister: How do parents access their child's evaluation data if they want to get more details of any learning challenges to be on the lookout for?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Again, this is a program that's conducted quite often by senior teachers or retired

teachers or that kind of thing. They're not diagnosing learning disabilities. They're not doing anything of that nature and so there is a scale that they are placed on in terms of their preparedness for kindergarten. I think we have to keep in mind that's the primary purpose of that assessment being done.

In terms of the access to the information, I'm not exactly sure as to a process to get any notes or whatever is required for that testing, but I can bring that back.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Access of EA support

Question to the minister: If the assessment shows an incoming student has areas identified that need extra work, how does the student access EA support?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

EA support is something that I'm proud to say we've invested tremendously in as a government over the past couple of years, and it's with good reason. I think what bears out here is that you would need to know what it is that the individual was having an issue with to be able to determine whether they might be eligible for that support.

I'm not sure in terms of the specifics of the question and it would differ for different individuals, but it's something that makes a great difference in classrooms and in the composition of classrooms and it's something that we're very proud to have invested significantly in, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I understand that EA support in the classroom for kindergarten is hard to come by and that the limited resources get targeted to students with highest need. Even then, classrooms often can only access limited support.

Question to the minister: How do parents get help for their children to keep from falling through the cracks if access to EA supports are limited?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Again, EAs is one element of support for students that are experiencing difficulty or have a diagnosed difficulty that would be going through our school system. We have done things like increased special needs grants, autism grants, to help to deal with children that have other issues that might fall within that, or on top of the EAs that might be there.

A lot depends, hon. member, in terms of what the issue is that that student is facing in terms of their access to it, and it's certainly something further to our discussion here in relation to health. We can always do more and we will continue to endeavour to do more. As I said, we have invested in 20 new EAs for our school system just in the last couple of months and we'll continue to look at that.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These questions come from a constituent of mine that has great concerns of their child that is facing some challenges in kindergarten, so that's the reason for the set of questions today.

Sometimes a student may benefit from specialized support like speech language pathology or occupational therapy. In fact, I know one situation where a student was identified as needing some OT support, but they would have to wait for a year or more to access that support.

Question to the minister: Do wait times of more than a year for services like OT support really sound like early intervention?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Again, and I do appreciate what the hon. member is saying. We've all had those kinds of inquiries and it's something that, to be frank, I wish that we could have dealt with on an immediate basis. The one thing that is important to mention is that a big part of this is the early work with those kids to determine what the issues are and then to get them the proper help.

We all know that child psychology is something that we've been working on in our department over the last couple of months, and previous to that as well, and that's one big key to trying to determine what help it is that these students need and it's something that we're committed to addressing and we will address going forward, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During second reading of amendments to the *Archives and Records Act* last spring, government was asked about what is being done to ensure that ministers and government employees are not using Blackberry messaging or text messaging to communicate on sensitive issues and bypass

the freedom of information and protection of privacy process.

At the time, the Provincial Archivist stated and I quote: We're going to continue to investigate and hopefully we'll be able to come up with a policy that will deal with all of the issues around government records that may be in that format.

Policy around government records

A question to the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture: Have you come up with a policy to prevent this abuse?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

What we have been doing is we've been working with the Auditor General and as, I believe, the hon. member is likely aware, we've invested significantly in our Public Archives and Records Office to help to ensure that we are moving forward in this regard –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – and those officers actually have just been hired to those positions. We have a total of nine new staff positions in that area, so we will be continuing forward in that department, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, your first supplementary question.

Ms. Bell: This is a longstanding issue that does not seem to be taken seriously by this government.

In 2013, the information commissioner of Canada issued a special report on instant messaging, which I will be tabling later on today. In that report, she concluded that instant messaging presents an unacceptable risk to the right of access to information.

A question to the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture: Would you agree that instant messages are, in fact, government records and need to be preserved and that a failure to do so is an offence under your newly amended *Archives and Records Act*?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to answer that question in two ways. The first is directly, which is to say: No, not automatically. Records aren't records by virtue of the medium that they're communicated in, or how they're communicated. Records are records based on what is contained in the content.

As I indicated, we have hired folks that will be experts in this area that will be actively providing advice to government departments. In fact, we have hired eight of them, to assist with the couple that we had previously, to ensure that we are doing our utmost on this. We've invested in different resources that those experts can use and we're looking to do our utmost to ensure that government records are maintained into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, your second supplementary.

Destroying government records

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very happy to hear that there are investments being made in staff and supports including those people, who may be able to identify the differences between transitory records and records of merit.

One of the reasons given for not tracking BlackBerry messages is that it is very difficult to access records that are on somebody else's BlackBerry. In reality, all

BlackBerry, PIN and SMS messages can be logged with the flick of a switch on the server.

A question to the minister: Will you commit to investigating this technology to help resolve the issue of ministers and staff destroying government records?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As I previously indicated, we've worked with the Auditor General's office and we have committed to investing a great deal of this province's money to looking to determine what can be done to ensure that all government records are maintained into the future. And that, we are, again, doing our utmost to develop policies to ensure that records are kept as they should be and to ensure that all government employees are aware of what constitutes a record and what's required to be done to keep them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

QEH parking fees eliminated

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Minister, it's been a year-and-a-half since parking fees were eliminated at the QEH. Can you speak to how well this is going?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, it's going fabulous.

In fact, as a department and as Health PEI, we certainly feel the importance of having loved ones being able to visit their patients while in hospital. To that degree, we decided to eliminate visiting hours. Anybody can

come to visit anytime. Also, we have seen, by eliminating parking fees, we have also had people's ability to not be inhibited by coming and visiting a loved one.

In fact, we have seen a volume of about 1,200 vehicles a day increase to about 1,500 vehicles a day, so there is uptake.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Public abusing free parking as car-pooling location

Speaker: The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, your first supplementary question.

Mr. Dumville: Minister, a recent letter to the editor in *The Guardian* suggested that the public is abusing the free parking at the QEH using it for carpooling; such as park-and-ride, parking and taking the bus downtown.

Is this happening and what is being done to prevent it?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, who did lobby extensively for having parking fees removed, we did (Indistinct) that letter to the editor. In fact, we can't really find any evidence that that's actually happening.

Our security that's revolved – been supporting the hospital, also supports the parking lot and reviews vehicles or takes note of vehicles that might be there an excessively long time. I think, more than anything, what's happened is, is because of our sizeable investment in our review of the linear accelerator bunker and getting that under construction, we had to take out 68 parking spaces at the QEH parking lot. We still have 40 spaces that have not been reinstated back into the system while construction continues.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, your second supplementary.

Increasing size of QEH parking lot

Mr. Dumville: Minister, that's good news that 40 spaces will be coming back.

Minister: Given how busy the hospital is and the high volume of cars always in the parking lot is there an opportunity to increase the size of the QE parking lot?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, yes, since we did have those 68 spaces that were removed during construction and we're certainly going to monitor that situation. I've been over numerous times myself, and sometimes it is hard to get a parking space. It's mostly based, sometimes, on volume, especially on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. We will be monitoring the situation and we will be putting a plan in place should we require more parking spaces at the QEH parking lot.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

Public consultations on the *Water Act*

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Minister, everyone has been impressed by your department's public consultation on the *Water Act*. However, I have heard that the public consultation for the *Water Act* regulations will only be accepted online.

Can you verify if this, indeed, is the case?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly want to ensure all that may be listening in today that that is certainly not the case. We will be using, basically, the mirror process that we used to develop the *Water Act* itself. We will be holding very open and public meetings all across the Island. We will be, though, taking online submissions for certain, as well as, face-to-

face meetings. We'll even take letters at the front desk of the department, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point your first supplementary question.

Timeline for completion of *Water Act* regulations

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, while the *Water Act* is on the floor of the House, there have been many references to the *Water Act* regulations.

Can you update the House on the timeline for the completion of these regulations?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, I appreciate the question. I would anticipate that early spring, staff, myself, will begin the process of booking gymnasiums and halls, probably in the same locations, or near where we were when we were collecting information as we developed the *Water Act*.

Those, I anticipate, will take some time, in the early spring. Again, we will use the summer months with staff to put together, what we will call draft regulations, moving forward. I would anticipate somewhere in the next probably 12 months. Probably about 12 months from this very time that we will be able to have the regulations complete and will be able to turn on the *Water Act*, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, your second supplementary.

Posting *Water Act* regulations online

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, I realize there will be many regulations for the *Water Act*. Communication is key to keeping Islanders informed on the progress of these regulations.

Would you commit to posting online any regulation as it gets completed?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, the hon. member is correct; there will a substantial amount of regulations involved with a lot of different headings for process. I would certainly anticipate there should be no problem at all as draft pieces get completed that we can post them online for people to take a better, further look at them, and submit other responses if they do so chose.

Yes, we will do our absolute best to get things online when we have them ready.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Consultation on amendments to health acts

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The health minister is amending the health act in this sitting of the Legislature. I'm just curious how much consultation has he done on the amendments to that bill?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, there are three particular acts that we are looking at doing some amendments on. One is the *Health Services Act* and that act is one that dictates the terms of reference for the Health PEI board.

On that particular one, we probably didn't do a lot of consultation on. The other two ones are issues around the appeal of the nurses act, which we've had numerous consultations with the nursing profession.

The other is the *Regulated Health Professions Act*, which will, when we repeal the nurses act, we'll be able to put them under the regulated health professions. We've had lots of consultation with the profession on that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, that's the act I'm talking about is the one that changed the terms of the Health PEI board. I feel it's a perfect opportunity to try and make changes to that act, to make these Health PEI board meetings public. We know that they oversee a \$660 million budget.

Health PEI and open public meetings

Will the minister bring changes that will enable Health PEI to have open public meetings, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, as far as the act and the board itself, once again, the amendments that we're looking at doing are to deal with term limits. As far as open and public meetings, I leave that to the Health PEI board itself to decide that.

But, we have, in this government, we've implemented the health community engagement committees which communicate with the Health PEI board in trying to get feedback from the public and to get good information transfer back and forth also with our local foundations. So, I think there would be lots of public engagement through those processes, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Health PEI board meetings

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wonder if the minister could tell us how many times the Health PEI board met in this past year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't have that information specifically on me, but I can tell you that they probably meet at least once a month. I, in fact, met with some of the board members, the chair and the CEO of Health PEI, this morning before I came to caucus. On each of those specific boards, they have committees and those committees usually meet about once a month as well.

There are a lot of meetings that they generally have, and we do have an annual meeting that is open to the general public for any questions. This year it was held at EastLink centre in Summerside, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister says they've had a lot of meetings. I mentioned that this board oversees \$664 million in our budget. I think the public deserves to know how many times they're meeting, who's been at these meetings. One of the amendments that the minister is bringing in is about how many times a Health PEI board member has to show up.

Attendance record at meetings for Health PEI

Can the minister table the attendance record for Health PEI over the past number of years?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member brings up a good point as far as that was one of the issues why we are amending the act, as we want to make sure that if there are individuals who have reasons to not be able to attend meetings; these are important meetings and they do meet rather frequently as far as approximately once a month or twice a month.

That's why we're making these amendments, to make sure we can have some sense of term limits. I'll see what I can find out as far as the attendance record. I don't think that would be a difficult thing to provide this House with information on, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tabling of remuneration for board members

Will the minister of health table the remuneration for all board members since Health PEI came to light?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, once again, there is remuneration for these board members. They give a lot of their time. They're dealing with a sizable budget and making some really challenging decisions and recommendations to the minister. So, I will go back to my department and see what information we can provide and I'd be happy table that if they provide it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is why we're asking for these meetings to be public. We're asking for the remuneration to be public. We're asking to find out just how many times they're meeting. The minister is right. There are a lot of good people on Health PEI and they're doing a lot of good work, but we're making changes to the act for some reason. We're limiting terms. We're saying that you have to show up so many times. There are obviously issues, so that's why we believe in the opposition that they should be open and transparent.

Health PEI and open public meetings (further)

Will the minister commit to having open public meetings? I can't get an answer, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that there's no sense of cynicism here of our board or anything of that nature.

It's just simply a case where we feel that there should be term limits. If there was a situation where a board member decided to want to stay on for whatever reason, I think it's important that we have diversity on the board, that we have turnover on the board, as well as if there's individuals that can't meet for particular reasons, I think it's important the minister have that authority to appoint somebody in their place because it is rather important.

Once again, I'll see what I can do to get the attendance records and if we can table any of the issues around remuneration. I think it's a top board within our Engage PEI concept and I know there's a set remuneration per board member, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Tabling list of groups who lobbied Health PEI

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we're seeing a lobbyist act come to the floor of the Legislature this House session. Here's another reason why they should be open: We don't know who Health PEI has been meeting with. On the floor of the Legislature, we were discussing the bill last week. The minister talked about – they had their monthly meetings, but they meet with a lot of different groups – all throughout, in between those meetings as well. I couldn't agree more. Diversity, turnover, all these things are great. Let's just open it up for taxpayers so we can see the good work they're doing.

Will the minister commit to tabling all the different groups and organizations that have lobbied Health PEI since its inception?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, as far as people, or business, or organizers lobbying the Health PEI board – I don't think that's the premise behind the Health PEI board. It's usually discussions, internally, within staff and when they do seek issues around public engagement, there is a committee of public engagement on the Health PEI board and they work with our community health engagement committees, which we have one in the east and one in the west to make sure we're getting good consultation from the public on potential policy changes and initiatives that would be developed at Health PEI.

Like I say, I commit to the hon. member that I'd be happy to bring back whatever information that I can. I'm pretty sure we can find the attendance records and remuneration for that particular board.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Leaky roof at Mt. Stewart Consolidated School

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister talks the talk there, but you know what? We don't know. We simply don't know all those meetings. He says: No, there's no lobbying. Nothing is going on. We don't know because they're not public.

My final question is to the minister of education.

Minister: The Mt. Stewart school Christmas concert is tonight; will you be going out to hold an umbrella over those kids while they do it? It's pouring rain out there and I'm not even joking. There's water coming in on the gym floor now.

Will you commit to that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I will say that this is a great time of the year with Christmas concerts. In fact, I think there's one –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – at the school in my district this evening. There's a few events on the go here this evening which I hope to get around to. I'm not sure that I can commit to that.

However, in response to the hon. member's ongoing line of questioning, we did have the director of the Public Schools Branch out to that school, I believe it was last Thursday, and he checked things out for me and is keeping an eye on it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]