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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

TUESDAY, 19 DECEMBER 2017

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Leader of the Opposition: Today the privacy commissioner issued a ruling finding this government broke the law in disclosing personal information to the Liberal Party of PEI.

Breach of privacy and apology

Question to the Premier: Will you publicly apologize today to the three women whose privacy was breached?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge, and I do so, on behalf of our government that we agree with the Privacy Commissioner's findings that there was a breach of privacy and that it was done in contravention of the FOIPP law. I note that this took place roughly six years ago and that the individuals involved are long since – no longer involved in government, but I will apologize to the individuals whose privacy was breached in contravention of the FOIPP law.

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.

Government's press release stated that the key players involved in the shameful incident are no longer in government. Islanders deserve to know who these key players are.

Names of individuals involved in breaking FOIPP act

Again, question to the Premier: Please name each key player involved in breaking the FOIPP act who are no longer in government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the Privacy Commissioner released her report this morning, yet she wrote it in the style that she does and is also the style of the Auditor General and other independent officers of this House. As I said, those events go back some time and I would prefer to allow the Privacy Commissioner's report to speak for itself.

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 Privacy Commissioner was unable to determine how these private records got from the fifth floor to Spencer Campbell and, ultimately, to the Liberal Party. We know the media remember Mr. Campbell hand-delivering these private records to their newsroom in the middle of an election campaign.

Delivery of private records to Liberal party

Question to the Premier: Who was responsible for giving these records to the Liberal Party?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, this work started under a previous Privacy Commissioner. I take it to be something that had already been going on for three years as an investigation before I was involved in any way in government. I take it that the Privacy Commissioner did, indeed, look into the chain of events that the Leader of the Opposition is asking about and she did not make findings in that. From my perspective, I think it's important to respect what the Privacy Commissioner says, respect her work, and to honour it and intend to accept her recommendations.

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.

Try as hard as the Premier may, he cannot distance himself from this incident as he only needs to look to either side of him. Two of his own Cabinet ministers at this time were, in fact, in government at the time. In fact, nine Liberal MLAs were in government and the Minister of Finance was running for election under the same leadership at the time.

Question to the Premier: Premier, why are you failing your own standard and refusing to accept your ministerial responsibility for this terrible incident that your government is responsible for?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I don't think anyone is refusing to deal with the issues. To acknowledge what the privacy commissioner has found. And, as I have said, to accept and to intend to act on her recommendations, and that's precisely why we have an office like the privacy commissioner; why we have the privacy commissioner, why she has done the good work that she has, and brought forward this report. That is the work of our government, is to acknowledge, as we've said, that this would not be tolerated under our government and that we intend to move forward learning and practicing the lessons in the privacy commissioner's recommendations.

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 privacy commissioner had found that a deputy minister disclosed this information to

deputies and other senior staff in the Premier's office and the Executive Council Office.

Disclosure of information and accountability

Question to the Premier: Premier, is this why your whistleblower bill has deputies, who are appointed and accountable only to you at the heart of your deliberately flawed process?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the Leader of the Opposition has brought up the whistleblower bill that is before us. I hope that when it comes to the floor that it will be dealt with directly as a positive step for our province; for the people of the province, and for the proper public administration along the lines that is proposed in the bill and that follows the precedents of other jurisdictions in this country. We're very proud of that, and of the Ethics and Integrity Commissioner and of the investments that we are making in record keeping.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, the FOIPP act was broken and Islanders' personal privacy was breached.

Proceedings to Crown Attorney's Office

Question to the Premier: Premier, will this matter be turned over the Crown Attorney's Office for proceedings to begin against the guilty parties?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I've read the privacy commissioner's findings and recommendations. None of them appear to point in that direction. I've asked of the

people in my department to read it, as well. If there is any feeling that there should be an initiative taken, then that may well be the case.

Let me say, that we respect the work of the privacy commissioner. We take to heart these recommendations. I repeat; we have, on the floor, perhaps, even today, whistleblower legislation that is meant to act directly on circumstances such as those involved here. We are making investments, as we have in our last, now, two budgets in record management and training that are also recommended by the privacy commissioner.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

CBC is doing a great piece this week on mental health crisis on PEI. It's called Peace of Mind. In the opposition, especially as health critic, we get these stories, as well.

I'd like to read one that we were made aware of recently: My 16-year-old daughter is getting worse every day. We are sitting in her room right now and she wants to hurt herself. I called my family doctor today to get her meds adjusted, only to be told they can't adjust them and there is nothing more she can do for her medication. We have been waiting to see a psychiatrist for 11 months. I don't know what else to do. Why is it so hard to get her the help she needs?

Mental health crisis on PEI (further)

I have a question for the health minister: Are we failing this family, minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, obviously, the stories that the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid is conveying here are certainly sad stories and we certainly

understand the toll that mental health can have on a particular family or an individual.

I would say that we have lots of services that are out there. We are seeing lots of Islanders participating in those services, whether that's our strongest families services, or whether it's our behavioural support teams, or to actually go to our mental health walk-in clinics or emergency rooms or what have you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The answer to my question was: no, we're not doing enough and we can do better.

I want to tell you another one here: We are in the middle of a crisis right now. The police have been to talk to my nine-year-old daughter tonight. She was violent. The worst she has ever been. They will come back if she escalates again. It took them an hour to talk her down. The officer told her father to call the doctor in the morning and explain what happened to try to get an emergency appointment, but I know that won't be possible. We need all the help and strength we can get.

Does the minister of health think that his government is failing this woman's nine-year-old daughter?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, once again, when it comes to mental health there, certainly we understand that there is an issue out there in the province, as well as there is in just about every other jurisdiction in Canada, and probably North America.

But I can tell this House that we are seeing Islanders participate in many issues. We've had over 520 families, or Islanders, have went to our mental health walk-in clinics just recently.

Our Strength Program has seen 177 youth go through that particular program. As well, we have over 51 families that are going through the behavioural support team.

Once again, there are many services out there, but, you now, I acknowledge that it's sometimes difficult to get access to a psychiatrist, but in some cases, it's not always a psychiatrist is the appropriate health professional to deal with an issue, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Sometimes it's difficult to see a psychiatrist? It's incredibly difficult to see a psychiatrist in this province.

Here's another one. Mr. Speaker, these are tough to read: My daughter told her counselor what her plan was to kill herself. She wasn't admitted to the hospital. I was told to take any type of ropes and cords out of my home. We wouldn't leave her alone for months. We would sleep on the loveseat while she would sleep on the couch. The calls to and from the police; the cost to change cell phone numbers so she wouldn't hang out with those certain people; the cost to drop her food at random places because you were scared she's starving; the cost to buy her new clothes because she lost 50 lbs. in three months because of drugs.

Minister: Do you think government is failing this woman?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, certainly all these stories that the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid are bringing forward are very difficult stories. They're challenges that our system is trying to work with and deal with. Once again, we've had over 369 Island individual have gone through our Strongest Families Program.

We have over 80 students have also been working with our student well-being teams. We're investing in developing a mental health campus. We're going to be dealing with working with our Canadian Mental Health Association. We've invested millions of dollars with them. We'll continue to do the investments necessary, but it's always a challenge to meet every individual's needs immediately.

I will also mention that we went through the process with Accreditation Canada, and they rated PEI's health care system a 95% plus when it comes to our ability to deliver health care to national standards, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know there aren't easy stories to hear. They're not easy to read, minister, but they're important.

Here's another one: My friend just left the emergency room with her 12-year-old son who was suicidal. They were seen by a doctor, who told them there was no pediatric psychiatrist available to see him. The doctor didn't feel comfortable prescribing antidepressants. They were told to go home. So now, they're on their way home with no treatment, no help and no further ahead.

Mr. Speaker, I've been hearing these promises and the promise that things are going to get better and we're going to get to it for 10 years now.

Do you think minister that this government is failing this 12-year-old boy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, it's good to know that the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid seems to be an expert in the delivery of health care services when it comes mental health.

Once again, if the individual did go to an emergency room and they seen a health professional and the delivery of mental health services or in emergency room to identify what would be the most appropriate action to take and whether there should be a case of prescribing of a medication or what have you, you have to – I have to take some solace that the health care professionals are delivering the services and making the appropriate recommendations when it comes to the individual that they're seeing, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's no need of firing shots over me here, minister. I'm getting these stories –

An Hon. Member: Oh, come on (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: – you hear these stories – there's no need laughing about it. These are serious, serious things that (Indistinct) come. I know they're tough to deal with, but you have to deal with them as a minister. I know you don't want to hear them, but you have to hear the stories –

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct) every day.

Mr. MacEwen: – I know, but we've been hearing them for 10 years now from this government, okay?

You promised, in 2014 and in 2015, for a dedicated youth inpatient mental health unit. Do you think the time is now for this unit?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity as minister to present to the Standing Committee on Health and Wellness with Dr. Keizer and Verna Ryan, and we outlined a plan as far as the delivery of mental health services in this province, and we are working towards that plan, and as well as that, we are working hard on the issues around recruitment, and I know the

hon. member identified an issue about child psychiatrists. Yes, we are short one child psychiatrists in this province. Recruiting and retention is working hard to try to recruit the necessary health care professionals, including psychiatrists, as well as a child psychiatrist, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government promised it in their election, and they did present to the standing committee, and do you know what they said when they were asked about this special unit? This is what they said, and I quote: However, we could not secure a reasonable location that was within our budget.

Minister, how much of a priority was this commitment if you couldn't find the dollars for it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the issues around mental health or for health care delivery in the province for that matter, it is not always about a money issue. It's also about trying to provide the services and health care professionals to deliver that service.

I readily admit that the issues of trying to find psychologists, to try to find psychiatrists, is a challenge. And when I asked my department about looking at other jurisdictions, are we the only one that's dealing with this, I'm finding out that we're actually not as bad off as many other jurisdictions.

Now, I don't want to say that it's about a race to the bottom, but it is about making the right investments, and we've committed about \$55 million to develop a campus model for mental health services to this province. We've got transitional housing, I think there's \$4.6 million in the Capital Budget to deal with some more transitional housing –

Mr. LaVie: No long term plan.

Mr. Henderson: – as well as forensics in this province, and we'll continue to put the investments in where required.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's quite ironic, the minister started off talking about how, you know, you can't just throw money at it, and then he lists off four things, big dollar figures.

They're going to be great. The campus is going to be great. That's going to be wonderful when it comes. When it comes, we're talking years and years.

Mr. LaVie: If it comes, if.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Presenting to ER with suicidal patients

Mr. MacEwen: What does someone do tomorrow when they show up at the ER at night with a teenager that's suicidal? What are they supposed to do?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to a question like that, I would suggest that they take the advice of the triage nurse and the physician in that's dealing with the service, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mental health beds for Island youth

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad the minister brought up that point, because those are the people that are suffering here. We've got frontline workers, mental health advocates; they're feeling the

brunt of this, because they're seeing them coming in, nowhere to (Indistinct) refer to, no inpatient bed to put them into.

Minister, how did inpatient mental health beds for Island youth get buried and forgotten at the bottom of this government's priority list?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: No priorities.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, once again, when it comes to inpatient services, you have to be able to deliver that service. It's not about having a bed in a facility. You also have to have the health care professionals that are able to deliver the service, and if there's some situations, we acknowledge that we do have a shortage. We're trying to recruit about five psychiatrists to this province, and I think there's a couple of psychologists and other health care professionals.

So once again we have some locums that are coming, we have some contracts that our people are signing that are coming in the future, and we're going to do our very best to integrate those people into the services provided to Islanders, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've heard these announcements about psychiatrists before in this Legislature.

We're talking about the lack of mental health services in this province and how it's affecting other frontline services. You could think of police that are filling in for the mobile health teams. We could think of teachers in our school system that are trying to help out.

We need to know what is going to be done immediately. They've talked about their long-term plan for 10 years now. What is

this government going to do to help tomorrow, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to many of the services, I had outlined many before, I mean we've expanded our mental health walk-in clinics. We've just recently put our student wellbeing teams together. That's just started in September. We have an opioid replacement program that's dealing with many of the issues, like the hon. member suggested, it is affecting other professions.

But we have also seen that issues around crime and some of those issues around with our opiate replacement program has seen a reduction in those kinds of things, so we have actually over about 900 people that are accessing those services right now, and we'll continue.

We've just recently launched an opioid action plan, and we'll continue to do other services as required, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Internal review of FOIPP act

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Recently, I asked the Premier to table the 2012 internal government review of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, but he would not commit to tabling the document.

Subsequently, I submitted a written question requesting its release, and I still wait for a reply. Am I the only one that finds it ironic that the Premier is being so secretive with a report that relates directly to access to information?

A question to the Premier: Why are you so reluctant to release this 2012 internal review?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The written question is with the department, and I'm not sure if I declined to release. I think those – that comments were made in a different context, whether it even was a question, I'm not sure. But in any event, we have a FOIPP review underway and I'm quite prepared to go back and work with the department on the question of that 2012 review, and for that to be part of the background as Islanders and members of this House are invited to respond to that FOIPP review.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party, your first supplementary question.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, last week the Premier announced a discussion paper on FOIPP, and considering government has had two-and-a-half years since it first committed to a review of the act, I was sort of disappointed when I read it to see the lack of analysis or of new information.

Almost everything in that paper has already been discussed extensively, was either in the privacy commissioner's latest review, or is information you would expect to find in a regular annual report. It offers no original research or visionary thinking.

A question to the Premier: Will you table all of the background information, including jurisdictional scans, budget forecasts, previous reports, reviews, and public comments that informed the preparation of this paper?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to take a look at what's currently on that landing page for people to respond to the FOIPP review, and quite happy to take a look to see if there is further information along the lines suggested by the Leader of the Third Party to enhance the ability of Islanders to respond to this FOIPP review.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party, your second supplementary question.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I personally believe it's critical that all Islanders have all access to all information regarding this act, and I'm not sure what results the Premier expects to receive through this consultation if he refuses to provide the public with all of the relevant information they require.

Premier, perhaps you could explain what you actually mean when you say openness and transparency, because this process appears to be neither open nor transparent, more like closed and opaque.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I believe I've said twice here today that I will take a look at the landing page, that the invitation – the question that arose and was first raised was whether the invitation was sufficiently presented and informed that Islanders could make their views known, make suggestions, engage in this process, which is entirely the objective and indeed the overriding spirit of our FOIPP legislation, and it indeed has force in this province, and I'm proud to say that's the case, so we haven't declined to do anything. We are very keen to have Islanders views, and that that take place in the spirit of openness and transparency.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Career Connect program

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

I'm personally aware of several students who find themselves unable to qualify for the Career Connect program. As you know, I've been a strong advocate for helping Island students obtain a post-secondary education with the least amount of financial burden, especially for students from rural PEI and those in my district that have to move away and pay rent and other necessities.

Can the minister outline what the requirements are for post-secondary students to receive EI while attending post-secondary?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the hon. member for that question and I know he's been a longtime advocate for the Career Connect program. I'm pleased to announce that back in the fall, the Career Connect information sessions went right across the province. We went to O'Leary, Tignish, Summerside, Charlottetown, and Montague and under this new program, post-secondary students have to be attached to full time studies at a post-secondary institution and they must also have an EI claim contribution with the federal government. They are also required to have at least one year workforce attachment to have done after high school completion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, your first supplementary question.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I feel very strongly that we have to remove any barrier to any program that could help ease the burden, financially, that our students may have to obtain an education. The minister just mentioned that one of the requirements was to be out of high school for one year.

Minister, why is it necessary for them to be out of high school for one year in order to be eligible for this Career Connect program?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I'd indicated earlier, they need that requirement to have workforce attachment, to be paying into EI to have a sufficient claim. What it does, it establishes some history to have the claim and it also gives them some workforce experience.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, your second supplementary.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister.

Removing barrier for students

I understand that New Brunswick, there's no requirement to be out of school for one full year and no workforce attachment, so I'm wondering if the minister and his department would consider doing the same by removing this barrier.

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've had over 1,000 applications to this program, so that just goes to show the popularity of this program. My department's working hard with these students to gain an education and as the hon. member said, anything we can do provincially and federally to help students get an education with the least financial burden, we're certainly willing to look at.

My department is also willing to review this within six months of the New Year to see if there's any enhancements we can make to this program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Diagnostic appointment services

Minister: We've been hearing about high numbers of missed diagnostic appointments at hospitals across the province which affects the timely delivery of health care services. Can you tell the House how many diagnostic appointments are being missed every month and with the increased publicity, are we seeing improvements on people missing appointments?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, this is a very good subject to be discussing and as you're well aware, the hon. member would be well aware that there's certainly diagnostic services that are provided at many of our hospitals across the province. When I've researched the subject, when it comes to diagnostic imaging testing across the province, whether that be ultrasound, MRI, CTE, echo, bone scans, across the entire province it's actually about 200 missed appointments per month.

So I would really encourage Islanders to make sure that to take in to consideration their friends and neighbors and make sure that they're either notifying us that they can't make their appointment or that they do attend their appointment, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Impact of missed diagnostic appointments on health care system

Minister, we all know that timely access to diagnostic testing is extremely important. What kind of impact does missing

appointments have on the health care system and people waiting for diagnostic testing?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, it certainly is a significant issue that we're concerned about with missed appointments for some of these diagnostic testing images, but some of the issues that impacts, it really increases the wait times for individuals who may require these types of services. Also, it can have an impact on a health outcome. The longer the time before they actually get that diagnostic test or image done, it also can provide a wait time which might help deal with trying to provide a decision on a particular issue. On top of that, it is an unnecessary cost to our system when we have professionals already there, ready to do the work, and an individual doesn't show up. I certainly encourage all those individuals to attend and make their appointments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Texting of reminder to diagnostic appointment

Minister, if my dentist and my hairdresser can text me one week prior to an appointment and I can confirm this appointment and I also get another text one day prior to the appointment – is this something that your department can look at, texting Islanders to remind them of their diagnostic testing appointment?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Indeed, our department is looking at many ways that we can try to improve to make sure that we can get this information out to those that may be considering not being able to attend a particular test.

Besides making phone calls, we are going to be looking at doing text messages, emails, doing whatever we can to try to make sure

we can get those reminders out to those individuals to attend and make their appointments. We're also considering looking at developing, maybe, a no-show – not necessarily a list, but to identify more how many people have missed their appointments in each of the facilities and locations. We have been doing it in some locations, but maybe that will encourage Islanders to participate in those particular tests.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Northern Pulp mill and wastewater plant

The news from Pictou around the Northern Pulp mill and the wastewater plants continue to alarm fishers. My question is to the minister of fisheries: When I first questioned you in November, you stated you wrote to Nova Scotia and copied Ottawa on your letter.

Minister: Have you heard back from Nova Scotia or Ottawa on this issue?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

This issue is certainly a very important one. The lobster industry, as we know, here is king on PEI. The landings last year were \$226 million in LFA 26. The area where that pipe comes out – may be coming out, hopefully not, \$67 million worth of landings on our side – to the fishers on our side of the strait. I did write to the minister from Nova Scotia. I spoke with the minister of Nova Scotia; we had a good discussion on this. I wrote to Minister Leblanc. I just want to say: I'm really glad that MP Sean Casey and Wayne Easter and Senator Griffin are here today because we are trying to get the word through to all players, on all sides, how important this issue is because we have to have this solved before 2020.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Support of environmental review of plant

Four weeks ago the minister talked about communications being what he was doing about the issue. My question is to the minister of fisheries: Minister, do you support a full federal environmental review for the Pictou mill plant?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Again, really serious issue and this is the kind of thing that we're discussing between the ministers. I know the Premier spoke about it as well. The Premier spoke with Premier MacNeill on this because it is, I said before, it's grave interest and it is a grave issue for sure.

We have a large pipe that may be coming out upwards of a kilometer into the Strait, right into the heart of the fishing grounds over there. We have to get this solved. I know the pulp plant itself has an issue there they want to solve; they want to get it solved before 2020, that's the idea. There was a meeting in the Pictou area, I'm sure as the hon. member knows, my deputy and my director were over at that meeting asking really good questions on that because we're trying to get to the bottom of this because we have to get this thing solved. I know the plant has to run but the fishery on PEI is king, as it is in lots of areas in Nova Scotia as well, really serious issue. We need all partners involved in this to bring this to a good conclusion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's not automatic that DFO be involved in a federal environment review.

DFO and full federal review

Question to the fisheries minister: Will you join with fishers in demanding that DFO take part in a full federal review?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Yesterday, I was at the annual meeting of the Southern Kings and Queens Fishermen's Association. Many of the players, you well know yourself. We had a good discussion on this topic there as well; had a little presentation by the fishermen's association as well as to actually what may happen.

They talked about the life cycle of the lobster and how some of the young are in the column for a good period of that time. When you're pumping fresh water into a salt water being, that's not a good scenario. We all have to work on that. I talked to Bobby Jenkins, the president of the fishermen's association. He and his executive met with hon. Dominic LeBlanc to discuss this very issue, so I think the discussions are going well. It's the solutions that we all have to get together and work on to bring this to conclusion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Stopping Nova Scotia discharge plan

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government was only too happy to send lawyers to fight against the New Brunswick

free the beer case at the Supreme Court of Canada.

My question to the minister of fisheries: Are you willing to take Nova Scotia to court and stop this discharge plan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

I don't think it's getting anywhere near that at the present time.

What we're trying to do is work with Nova Scotia, work with the federal government and I think in good, strong, clear discussions making our points clearly known, explaining to them the value of the fishery, both to our province and to Nova Scotia, which I know they're quite likely well aware.

But, that's the stage we're at at the present time, and we hope we can come to a solution so we don't have to get government money spent going through the court system, but it's really serious and we are staying right on top of that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Legal action to protect seafood industry

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In October, the mill was issued a fine after the stack test revealed it was emitting practical matter above the allowable limit.

To the minister of fisheries: Minister, will this government take legal action to protect our seafood industry and our environment?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

We realize the seriousness of this. I know the plant over there does as well. They know they have some things they have to clean up there. They've been put under a timeframe until 2020 to get this done. We also understand that the same company has a plant in Saskatchewan, which is in-land, and somehow they are solving that problem in there with not dumping it into a main waterway, and hopefully we can get them to see that's the solution we would like to see instead of taking this water out.

This is the interesting part – this water that they're going to release into the Strait – we say: Why can't you recycle that through the plant? Well, it's not fit to recycle through the plant so why would you put it in the Strait? These are some of the things that we have to get clarified and –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) fishery (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: – good discussions, making sure that they know the value of this industry to both our provinces. I think we'll come to a good conclusion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our seafood industry employs close to 9,000 Islanders directly, and it is worth \$300 million per year to our economy.

Question to the minister of fisheries: Will you contact your Nova Scotia colleagues once again and tell them directly that PEI is against the proposed project and will go to court to stop it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

In my first answer, I think I noted \$226 million worth in landings in the fishery. That's not the spinoff of that as well. We know the value of the industry, not only to PEI but also to Nova Scotia.

We will work with all our partners. I am in good communication and have a good working relationship with hon. Keith Colwell in Nova Scotia and we will continue to keep that communication going. We also have to deal with the environment minister there and when I wrote the letter to minister LeBlanc, we also copied it to the federal minister of environment as well to make sure that all parties are fully aware of the situation going on over in the Pictou area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

North Lake bridge

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My next question is to the minister of transportation.

Minister, during the House sitting this fall I asked you a question if your department was meeting with the people of Eastern Kings over the North Lake bridge. Do you know if that meeting took place yet?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No, hon. member, that hasn't taken place yet. But we certainly will be making contact with that community, and continuing to work with them on any concerns that they have about the North Lake bridge.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, your final question.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another question to the minister of transportation: Minister, there are 90 boats fishing out of there just during the lobster season. Over 100 during the summer season; it's the tuna capital of the world. They deserve a bridge and the money, the tax dollars that Eastern Kings puts in to your government; I think they deserve a bridge.

Will you have this meeting as soon as the New Year starts?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. —

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Speaker: — Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would agree that the lobster fishery, the tuna fishery is of importance, not just to our government, but to all of PEI and the people of PEI, and the employment that it makes for the people of PEI —

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) Charlottetown (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: — for the tourism industry —

Mr. Myers: Dragging all the money to Charlottetown.

Ms. Biggar: — across PEI —

Mr. LaVie: They deserve a meeting.

Mr. Myers: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: — it is a very important —

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: — industry. Our government will continue —

Mr. Myers: Stealing from the poor —

Ms. Biggar: — with —

Mr. Myers: — giving to the rich —

Ms. Biggar: — with communities —

Mr. Myers: – the Liberal way.

Ms. Biggar: – with fishers, with tourism –

Mr. Myers: Hood robin.

Ms. Biggar: – to ensure –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – that is an area that we
continue to build for all –

Mr. Myers: Reverse Robin Hood.

Ms. Biggar: – Islanders, not just for this
government.

Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Hear! Hear!

[End of Question Period]