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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

TUESDAY, 11 APRIL 2017

Questions by Members

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Police services review**

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Towards the end of the fall sitting government released its long-awaited police services review. I think it's important because this issue can greatly affect the health and safety and the wellbeing of our families and communities across the whole Island.

Question to the Premier: What did your tired Liberal government's police services review tell us about sexual assault and violence against women and children?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the work of the consultants who worked with the various police services across the province came back and told us that we needed to have a more consistent approach or practices among our police forces, and that we should take steps to put that in place, and indeed there are working groups and a full cooperation of the police services that are underway now with an aim to pursuing that, and indeed sexual assault and violence will be part of what is captured by that work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Sadly, Islanders are not immune to issues of sexual assault and violence against women and children. These issues have real physical, emotional, and social impacts that affect learning, health care, our justice system, and our workforce.

Question to the Premier and Attorney General: Why didn't your government's police service review look more closely at how police forces across this Island monitor and deal with issues of sexual violence?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the work of the police services model, as the members of this House will know, was to look at the overall collaboration, effective working together of police forces in this province.

As an example of how that spirit of collaboration is indeed in place, when there were media reports earlier this year about the unfounded cases that were showing up in reviewing sexual assault complaints across the country, I made a request of all of our police forces, both municipal and RCMP, to review their files over the past three years and they are in fact fully cooperating with that.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Public health and safety issues**

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To me, this is another major gap in your government's \$150,000 police services review; a major hole when it comes to a serious issue of public safety for Island families and communities.

Question to the Premier and Attorney General: Why didn't your terms of reference for this review look at the impacts of these important public health and safety issues?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, and I'm happy to say – not happy, but in any case – I'll inform the House that

we take this question very much to heart in terms of dealing with complaints and of building the confidence and the attention in the community to be sure that we're doing everything we can to reduce the incidence of sexual assault and violence, and indeed what will come out of the work that has – that will result from asking our police forces to review their cases over the past three years is that the police forces, the ministry department, the centre for dealing with sexual assault, victim services will all come together, frontline services, and ensure: A) That there are consistent standards in terms of reporting and investigating these situations; and, that everything is being done to ensure that victims are being dealt with with the fullness and the full treatment and response that they deserve from all aspects of the public service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

### **Treatment of the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre**

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier: Do you stand by your government's treatment of the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre over the past five days?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and the Status of Women.

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The PEI Rape and Sexual Centre works intimately with victims of violence and sexual assault and I know they are the frontline workers out there. It is not a crisis line, but it does work with victims impacted by sexual violence, but people who have physical needs, you know there are various access points of counseling throughout PEI and those who are victims of sexual assault should get in contact through their mental health centres or the ER.

But, I applaud the frontline workers and I applaud those women who have raised this as an issue for us to discuss. If we don't talk about it we're never going to address it face on.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Government Whip used Question Period to blame the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre, an NGO, for not doing enough to support victims.

Premier: Do you stand by these inferences made by your Government Whip?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our government and our team are fully seized with this issue. We understand that it is something, where every aspect of a service that is offered in this province needs to be supported; needs to be paying attention; needs to be working together, including the members of this House on all sides to reduce the incidence of sexual assault and violence. And to dealing, in a sympathetic way, to complaints that come forward, and to working together through all aspects, whether it's policing; whether it's victim services; whether it's frontline services; whether it's response to victims, to make sure that we're doing the best we possibly can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I commend Islanders, who again, are forming groups to support one another, and showing the leadership that one would expect from this government. This Premier

seems to delight in forcing Islanders into action and we are, collectively, again squaring up to our challenges in another one of his tests.

**Premier:** Why is this the attitude of you and your tired Liberal government? Why is this the attitude you take towards vulnerable Islanders, who need your leadership as the Premier of this province the most?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear about, not only our attitude, but our commitment and responsibility to address and to respond to and to be out in front as a government and as a Legislature and as a people in dealing with sexual assault and violence.

Let me cite the example, which I mentioned earlier; when those reports appeared in the media, starting with the *Globe and Mail's* national review of the unfounded cases. I requested, as minister, that all of our police services review their files, starting with 2014 through 2016, that they have a report to us by the end of March. We're compiling that data.

We have a plan to bring all of those people together, as well as, victim services, frontline workers and our people throughout government to ensure that we're working together with the community organizations that we're giving the fullest, fastest, most appropriate response to people who have – who are victims and who have complaints of violence or sexual assault.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### **Gaps in supports and services**

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Ms. Compton:** Mr. Speaker, there is no recognition from this tired government that there are massive gaps in services and supports. Services and supports that we need as Islanders.

The Government Whip stated on the weekend, "I'm not here to diminish the centre, but if people perceive that as being the only face of government, we need to ensure people be aware of what it actually is."

**Premier:** Instead of using Question Period as an awkward staged attempt at shifting the blame, why are you not taking meaningful action to address the gaps that this NGO and all NGOs need for their funding?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me very clear about the language that I used in response to the previous question, which said that we are stepping forward and we do so with a sense of responsibility and leadership on this very serious question.

In doing so, we stand with and we recognize and we support the efforts of the NGOs; of the people who are providing victims, and frontlines services, and everyone who is working on this issue and the people who have worked on it over decades. This is not new.

There are people who have done some very important work and shown leadership in the community over time. We celebrate that. We recognize it. Of course, because of that good work, we recognize that we can and must do better. We must live up to our responsibilities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. LaVie:** The 18% showed that.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

### **Public investment into frontline services**

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The coordinator of the Rape and Sexual Assault Centre clearly articulates the problem, "We could all use more resources

but there's plenty of asks out so there, so I guess it's a matter of government priorities." You tabled a \$1.8 billion Budget on Friday without any meaningful help for those NGOs, and any meaningful help to make a difference for Islanders in crises.

**Premier:** Why is your government wasting public money on a study, when we all know what is needed is more public investment in frontlines services for supports for rape and sexual assault victims?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's been said quite often over and over here already today, how much we value the important work that our NGO partners do.

Through my Department of Family and Human Services, we do fund the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre. I was out there. I met with the executive director. I met with the therapists that work frontline services. They give the frontline services day after day, and they are caring. We do respect the work that they do.

Government has committed, on an annual basis, to review the funding that we do provide to our NGO partners. We will continue to evaluate it.

If I could one step further, we've all said here that we can do better as government. Government can always do better. That's the easy one. I think as a society we all can do better.

When we have, when we are still victim blaming, when have judges that say that a woman, who is unconscious in the backseat of a taxi – driver, is able to give consent. Every time we turn our head away when we hear about a victim of sexual abuse, that they have been raped and we ask: What was she wearing? Where was she walking? Was she by herself? We do every victim a disservice. Every one of us in the Chamber and every one of us out there in society can do better and should do better, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. LaVie:** Eighteen per cent showing.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

### **Increase of grant funding to NGOs**

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that impassioned response.

We know there are massive gaps, and we know you want to do better.

**Mr. Premier:** Would you please support a budgetary amendment to increase grant funding to NGOs to make a real difference for Islanders in crises?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Trivers:** Less talk, more action.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, we did fund – let me say, the estimates are coming, and that's exactly their purpose. There will be an opportunity to take a look at that and give full consideration to it.

We did, in early March, fund representatives of victim services, the Crown and of the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre to take part in conference, knowledge exchange, the criminal justice system's response to sexual assault against adults. We intend for that knowledge, together with what comes from the police review, to be carried forward as we work together to ensure that we're delivering the best service possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

### **Support services for victims of sexual assault re: Budget**

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, we discussed the serious issue of rape and sexual assaults here in this province and how we support victims of sexual violence.

Question to the minister of the status of women: Minister, please tell the House here today, what specific new initiatives are funded in this year's Budget to improve support services for victims of sexual violence?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As has been noted, it's very serious that we pay attention to the needs of those that have experienced sexual assault and have the after effects of that. Within my particular department we do work with the NGOs through the Interministerial Women's Secretariat, we fund a number of grants. I will be announcing those grants from within my department.

I do know, also, that Family and Human Services also support in funding up to \$240,000, specifically for the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre. That is just a myriad of all of the programs that we support right across PEI through mental health centres and a number of other NGOs.

We will continue to work and to support and to work and support with those victims to ensure that they are getting the attention and the services that they need when they need them.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know that the issues of sexual violence are a serious problem here in our province. We've heard it at the standing committee, we've heard it at the *Child Protection Act* review, we've heard it from community members.

Again, question to the hon. Minister Responsible for Status of Women: Why is there not any new funding earmarked to

improve services for victims of sexual violence in this year's Budget?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, again, I will reiterate that the work that the Interministerial Women's Secretariat does from within my department –

**Mr. Trivers:** Is that new funding?

**Ms. Biggar:** – we are not the funding agent for those particular NGOs; however, we do work closely to –

**Mr. Trivers:** My question is about new funding.

**Ms. Biggar:** – educate across government the important impact of family violence and the impacts that it has –

**Mr. Trivers:** No new funding.

**Ms. Biggar:** – starting right at – starting right at our own home level. Our home, our school, our communities – we are all in this together and when we talk about prevention of violence against women and children, it starts with you. We cannot ignore it, what's happening around us in this province, and I implore everyone to stop making victims and revictimizing those who have gone through the experience. I hold up and thank those front-line workers that work with those victims day after day and we will continue in government to support those and to ensure that those services are there.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Public health and safety issues (further)**

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister talks about victims and revictimizing these victims and the minister knows herself, as I do – because I've been receiving the same messages from many of these heroic individuals that are speaking up. Due to the statements made by this

government last week, they are indeed feeling revictimized.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Aylward:** There are many Islanders who hoped and expected that this issue would be a higher priority for government.

Question to the hon. Minister Responsible for Status of Women: Why isn't this serious public health issue more of a priority for your government?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have been reaching out to those that I have had the opportunity and the honour to hear their stories. Just because I don't put it on Facebook that I was talking to so-and-so and so-and-so and oh, thank you very much – doesn't mean that I, as a woman first of all, and as an MLA for 10 years, have not worked hand-in-hand with women who are in need of supports, whether it is shelter from an abusive partner or making sure that they know where to go for supports. But when we hold ourselves up as the only person who has the right to talk about sexual assault in this province, then that is revictimizing the people who have experienced that.

I, not only as a woman, but also as the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, will continue to monitor and to work with those organizations across PEI and across our government departments. We work hand in hand to implore and to rise up the awareness of what we need to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Islanders affected by this issue are tired. Tired of no real action and losing patience with this tired Liberal government.

Question to the hon. Minister Responsible for Status of Women: When can Islanders expect to see some meaningful action on the serious public health issue affecting Island women and children?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and Minister Responsible for Status of Women.

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My department, minister of family services, and the minister of health and wellness have been working hand in hand across departments to put the Women's Wellness Program into place at Prince County Hospital and in community centres across Prince Edward Island. Not just for medical services of termination of pregnancy, but to ensure that those services are there for mental health, for postpartum depression, for a number – a myriad of issues that affect women day-to-day across Prince Edward Island.

That is some of the stuff that we have done that governments in the past have not had the courage to address across this province on behalf of women. I am proud to be part of the Liberal government that put that program in place so that women do not have to go and get an abortion or other services off PEI and put themselves in danger.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

### **Government hiring outside legal counsel**

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

In section 13.04 of the Treasury Board Policy and Procedures Manual, which sets out the policy for the selection of contractors, legal services are explicitly exempt. It concerns me that something that costs government hundreds of thousands, if

not millions of dollars every year is not covered in the procurement policy.

A question to the hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Premier: Is there a separate policy on this and if so, what is the procedure for government departments or agencies to hire outside legal counsel?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the government has relationships with a number of outside law firms, and in some cases, those are in fact determined through an RFB process. In other cases, there are standing relationships between a department or agency and counsel and those are built up over time and are a matter of expertise and trust in the relationship – where there are those standing relationships.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you.

I take it from that answer that there is no policy in place. Listening to the Auditor General testimony on e-gaming of Public Accounts, the thing that stood out for me above all else is the utter lack of oversight when departments contract outside legal services. In fact, it wasn't until the Legislative Council Office expressed concerns about the endeavor to the Deputy Attorney General that she became aware of this scheme. If there had been an effective policy, I believe that whole fiasco could have been avoided.

So, would it not make sense, Mr. Premier, to remove the exemption for legal services and introduce a policy that ensures that the Office of the Attorney General provides strict oversight of contracting for legal services?

**Speaker:** Hon. Premier.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, as things have been done, and this has been for

some time, departments or agencies determine their own relationships with outside counsel. There may, indeed, be a reason or an opportunity for that to be coordinated through the Department of Justice or the Attorney General and it's something that we are considering.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

As Attorney General, Mr. Premier, you are the chief law officer of the Crown and you have a unique responsibility to uphold the law and to provide legal advice to government. So, you should have, I believe, direct oversight of outside legal services.

Nova Scotia has a policy, which I will table later this afternoon, that requires the minister of justice to approve all contracts for legal services and it sets out when outside advice can be sought.

Mr. Premier: Will you agree to review and adopt the Nova Scotia policy during this sitting?

**Chair:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I'll be glad to have the Nova Scotia policy tabled and appreciate the hon. member bringing it forward.

I will, indeed, review it and it's something that I'll be happy to take under consideration. I'm not, obviously, in a position to say here today that precisely it would be adopted or that there'd be any timing for that. As I said, this is something that has been given – we've been giving attention to this and there is some reason whereby it might make sense for this to be more fully coordinated through the department of justice.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

**Inadequacies in records management procedures in government**

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

My question is to the minister of Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture and the Minister Responsible for Records Management –

**Mr. LaVie:** Oh, here we go.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Minister, a recent Auditor General report outlined inadequacies in the records management procedures in government.

Minister: Could you outline your department's records management response to the Auditor General's report?

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct).

**Mr. MacEwen:** Tell us how good you are.

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

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

**An Hon. Member:** I'm going to sit down for this one.

**Mr. Currie:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Prior to Christmas I was pleased to table the three-year strategy in conjunction with the IT Shared Services and Jill MacMicken, the Provincial Archivist, and staff have done an outstanding job.

We've renewed policy, bringing in legislation, and enhanced procedures. We're bringing in more staff. We're also currently training and are undertaking training in all government departments. We've secured a new site, new infrastructure for storage. IT Shared Services has expanded and purchased more electronic storage. We've very –

**Mr. Myers:** Are you going to follow the rules?

**Mr. Currie:** – that we will be tabling a report annually to update all members of the Assembly on the work that's ongoing with records management.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, your first supplementary.

**Timeline of new records management improvements**

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister: Could you inform the House as to when it is expected that the new records management improvements will be fully undertaken and in place by government?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister –

**Mr. Myers:** They won't follow them anyway, what difference –

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great question.

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

**Mr. Myers:** More rules for Liberals to break.

**Mr. Currie:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We've tabled the three-year plan. As I indicated, the most important thing is that there is an annual report that will update all members of the Legislative Assembly and it will allow us the capacity to enforce compliance and enforce the legislation through the provincial archivist. That will be completed by 2019-2020. It's a three-year plan.

That work is ongoing and I'm pleased with the progress to date.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Additional costs to records management program**

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister: Could you inform the House as to the additional capital and operational costs required to implement the records management program?

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

**Mr. Currie:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We will be bringing a budget forward. We have committed to a few hundred thousand dollars to secure new positions; to staff departments to enforce and to build capacity on managing records.

We have, through TIE, secured a second records centre for storage. As we evolve in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we've purchased more electronic space through IT Shared Services to manage the volume of records that we have the responsibility to store.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

**Senior housing units in Summerside**

**Mr. Palmer:** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Family and Human Services: I get a lot of affordable senior housing inquiries from people in Summerside.

Minister: Could you inform the House as to the number of senior housing units located in Summerside?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Seniors' Housing Program provides housing, apartment-style, or apartments to low to moderate income seniors across Prince Edward Island.

In Summerside, specifically, we have 186 units available across 14 buildings in Summerside. These range from, we have pet-friendly ones; no-pet owned ones; we have no smoking ones; we have smoking ones. These are all based on 25% of the senior's income, thus leaving them more money at the end of the month to provide for themselves.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, your first supplementary.

**Waiting list for seniors' housing in Summerside**

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, minister.

Could you inform the House as to the waiting list for seniors' housing in the City of Summerside?

**Mr. Myers:** There's the (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

**An Hon. Member:** Good questions.

**Mr. LaVie:** Good question. I knew it was coming. I asked him.

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At the end of March, the waitlist for seniors' housing in Summerside currently sat at about 245. We do recognize the importance of strategic planning around the waitlist and addressing long-term plans for Island seniors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Trivers:** Less talk, more action.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, your second supplementary.

**Mr. Palmer:** It would seem to me that demand for affordable seniors' housing outstrips the supply.

Minister: Could you inform the House of your department's strategy for better matching supply with demand for affordable senior housing in Summerside and other Island communities?

**An Hon. Member:** Excellent question.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As mentioned in the House previously, we are currently in the process of a provincial housing strategy, hoping to line that up with, also, a national housing strategy that the federal government has undertaken, as well.

This is looking to align the supply and demand with the current and future needs of Prince Edward Islanders.

I will also say that during this process we will also be consulting and collaborating with municipalities, private developers, our FTP colleagues, towards more long-term solutions for Islanders and Canadians in general.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

### **Review of Island police force cases**

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In February of this year, *The Globe and Mail* published Unfounded, a 20-month investigation into how police forces in Canada deal with claims of sexual assault. The Premier has mentioned here already that his department has asked the Island police forces to review their unfounded cases over

the last three years and report back to the Premier by the end of March.

Premier, a question: Do you have all of the information you need in from all of the reviews?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, we had a response from all but one of the police forces and that is in the works and we expect to have it any day. The intention is to bring everyone together to learn everything we can and to develop some standardized practices as a result of that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier: What did they find out? What did the reviews tell you?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, because we're waiting for that further report, I don't have all of that information together, at this point. I can indicate to the House is, a) that I'm prepared to share that information with the House when we have it in one compilation. And that there is room, in this area, for some greater standardization, or some greater attention working together to be sure that everything is being dealt with and recorded from an information point of view in the same manner.

This is something that's been coming to light across the country, as police forces have been reviewing the experience in this area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**PEI rates for sexual assault claims and national average**

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This investigation found that, nationally, 19% of sexual assault claims brought forward to police between 2010 and 2014 are dismissed as unfounded and not pursued further.

*The Globe and Mail* investigation reported that Prince Edward Island's unfounded rate was to be 27%.

Premier: Can you explain why PEI's unfounded rate for sexual assault claims could be twice as high as the national average?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, 27 and 19 don't quite compute to 2 to 1, but let me make the full response, which is: That this has been taken to heart, whatever that rate is, to ensure that when a case is determined to be unfounded that, that, in fact, means that the case should not proceed, or that there is not evidence. That is exactly what police forces across the country, together with the officials from the ministry of justice; from people who are working with victims; or people who are working with frontlines, to come together and be sure that this is, indeed, a situation that is being dealt with properly, fully and consistently. That's exactly what we're committed to in the case of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Many people, including the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women worry that this number of unfounded cases of sexual

assaults will discourage victims from reporting assaults.

Question to the Premier: What is your government doing to dispel that worry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I think we should all share, and I certainly do, the concern in this area that everything we do build confidence of complainants or potential complainants and victims to come forward, to seek help, to approach frontline services, and to feel that they will be dealt with properly and vindicated when they approach the criminal justice system, and that is exactly 100% our commitment and our concern, and we see the advisory council as a very important partner as we move forward on this journey.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Reviewing sexual assault complaints annually**

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier's right, and that's why we're raising this question today. We know that statistics show that only one in ten sexual assaults are even reported, and that's why it is such a concern.

As most speakers before me today have indicated, as a society we face a real issue with how we are addressing incidence of sexual violence.

Many jurisdictions across North America are adopting variations of what's become known as the Philadelphia model. Basically, once a year community members, stakeholders, and law enforcement sit down together and review all of the complaints deemed unfounded to make sure no errors or omissions have happened.

Question for the Premier: Would you consider this type of model for PEI?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier the multiple parties who address this issue have indeed already come together to take part in a conference addressing this specific question.

In early March, there will be a coming together with the data that has been assembled by the police forces reviewing three years of cases, and that is indeed (Indistinct) – that event will itself be an example and a demonstration of what is referred to as the Philadelphia model here on Prince Edward Island, and our commitment is to come together and to ensure that we have consistency and professionalism, and the fullest, most comprehensive, and sympathetic service for victims of sexual assault.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Recently, the Brantford Police Services has become the first Canadian force to adopt a form of the Philadelphia model.

Question to the Premier: Would you have any objections to pursuing a review process for sexual assaults incidence in PEI annually?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I of course am fully supportive of that and we've already commenced one going back three years, and in doing so it is our intention and our commitment for that to be a continuing process forward.

With the number of police forces that we have in Prince Edward Island, this is a great example and a great opportunity for those forces to work together, to coordinate efforts, to have consistent standards, and to learn – to learn and to ensure right through

the continuum, I'll call it, of the relationship with victims, complainants, through to how the communication takes place at the end of the process and the follow-up, that that's all part of what we're working together on, and we're totally committed to that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, your final question.

### **Citizens' assembly model of reviewing sexual assault cases**

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's good. The conference is a good start.

As legislators, we need – this is something that we need to give serious thought to. It's more than that. It's a conversation that we must all engage in if we're going to make a real difference, and one of the things I didn't hear in that is that community engagement piece of the process, the Philadelphia model.

Question to the Premier: Would you be open to be having a broader public conversation on this issue through something like a citizens' assembly model?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I certainly intended for it to be understood that the community is very much involved with that, and as the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women indicated on a number of occasions today the community partners, the NGOs, the people have been working to advance our response in this area over generations, and certainly who work very diligently on this with the greatest degree of caring and knowledge of the community.

We have been working actively with all of those partners and will continue to do so, and that's exactly what we envisage coming out of this three-year review, and we'll report to the House on exactly what we've learned from that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** Thank you, Premier.

Just a few remarks, hon. members, regarding today's Question Period. As you all know, and I know the opposition very possibly were getting impatient with the length of the answers.

Because of the topic of the questions, a very serious topic, women's issues, I – in most cases, the answers went over, and to be honest with you: I didn't feel justified in cutting anybody off.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct), Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** And I know you, opposition, wanted answers too, because they were good questions and honest, serious questions.

But from now on, I don't know if I'll be so generous.

**Ms. Biggar:** We understand.

[End of Question Period]