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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

WEDNESDAY, 12 APRIL 2017

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mill River deal and Rodd's loans

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the minister of economic development: Can you confirm that your government threatened to call all of Rodd's loans if they didn't sign off on the sweetheart Mill River deal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Rodd property at Mill River, if that is what you're talking about, is a very strategic establishment in the western part of Prince Edward Island. The hon. member just spoke about rural development.

We've been dealing with this issue for the past little while, and we see some bright lights for the Mill River property.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's quite a runaround I was just given for a very direct question.

Question, again to the minister of economic development: Did your government threaten to call Rodd's loans if they didn't sign off on the sweetheart deal so you could make it happen?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I had no knowledge of anybody talking to Rodd's in

that manner on any issue that was relevant on calling in any loans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's funny. Some of your own hon. members are talking about it and every lawyer in Charlottetown is talking about it, but you're pretending like it didn't happen.

Come clean right here with the House today. Tell Islanders: Why were you so desperate to push through the Mill River deal that you threatened to call the loans on the Rodd company?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's been no secret that this government has been aggressively seeking buyers for all of our golf courses as we feel that it's the best interest to move those golf courses to the private sector.

We had a real opportunity here with a local individual that wanted to invest millions of dollars into a property that, somehow we didn't see that it had a very bright future in the hands of governments and the private owners and we're continuing to pursue other interests in other golf courses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is three questions then.

We all know that it happened. Everybody

knows that it has happened. At every water cooler, at every law office they're talking about it. How do you think I found out about it? Do you think I just made this up? Like, yeah, right. Come on.

Question again: Will you come clean with Islanders?

Come clean with Islanders and tell Islanders, once and for all: Did you threaten Rodd's in order to get them to sign the agreement to sell the property by threatening to call their loans?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. Trivers: Simple question.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, you know this agreement is going to save this property. It's going to save jobs. It's going to save economic spin-off. It's going to grow rural PEI. We're going to continue to work with this company to see the advancement of this property.

It's a signature property in the western part of rural PEI that creates upwards of over \$1.7 million in wages. We had 16,000 golf rounds played last year. We had over 5,000 campsites sold, or 2,500 campsites sold and 5,000 room nights.

It is a strategic property in western PEI, in rural PEI, and we want to keep it that way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, to the minister of economic development on his sweetheart Mill River deal: Who else did you offer this property to?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, as I stated before, I think this government, the past two years, and the previous government, were advertising freely and frequently on the golf courses of Prince Edward Island –

Mr. Trivers: It was more than just a golf course.

Mr. MacDonald: – and there was an RFP done –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) golf course (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) four years ago (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: – and so we opened it up to an RFP. We were honoured to see Mr. McDougall want to come back to his roots and make a huge investment in that property.

But more importantly, this government on the opposition side, continually divide rural PEI and urban PEI. Here is a situation where we have rural PEI, the government's investing in and they're still condemning it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Everybody is condemning this sweetheart deal.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mill River deal out for tender

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This sweetheart deal was sole-sourced behind closed doors.

To the minister of economic development on his sweetheart Mill River deal: Why did this property fail to go out for tender?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, the property did go out to RFP –

Mr. Trivers: No, it didn't.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, let me tell you that the property went out to RFP.

This property, along with government entities in this whole package were losing somewhere of about \$850,000 in taxpayers' money a year –

An Hon. Member: You still are.

Mr. MacDonald: What we're trying to do is alleviate that pressure from the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island by putting this deal together. This deal is a good deal for West Prince and PEI.

To have someone like Mr. McDougall step up to the plate and invest his time and effort at his age with his family into that community. If you –

Mr. Myers: I notice you –

Mr. MacDonald: – look at the spin-offs –

Mr. Myers: – didn't say money.

Mr. MacDonald: – in Bloomfield –

Mr. Myers: He's not investing his money.

Mr. MacDonald: – what we've done as far as – if you look at the Kentucky Fried Chicken or the Grecos or the hockey tournaments –

Mr. Myers: This isn't about Kentucky fried chicken (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: Or if we just talked about Hockeyville,

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. Currie: He's got you on the ropes now.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister's right. It did go for RFP in 2011 for the golf course alone. Seven years

later, six years later was the last time that RFP went out.

Lots of Island business people would have taken a free golf course from this government.

To the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism on his sweetheart Mill River deal: Why did you fail to publicly advertise this property?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. J. Brown: Don't say that.

Mr. Trivers: Fog bank.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate, but as I said before, that these properties have been on the market. We've tried several things. We were condemned all the time for not being able to sell them. We didn't have the right people trying to sell them.

Ms. Compton: You didn't sell (Indistinct) give it away.

Mr. MacDonald: We had all kinds of issues with this, and Mr. McDougall steps up to the plate –

Mr. Myers: You didn't sell it.

Mr. MacDonald: We rejuvenated property that was going to need \$6.6 million in capital expenditures alone.

Mr. Myers: Sounds like you bought it.

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct) 12 years.

Mr. MacDonald: Over the past – next 12 years.

Government can't continue to spend taxpayers' money in this regard, Mr. Speaker. We need new investments. We've turned it over to the private sector, and we're going to see that property prosper. We're going to see the economic spinoffs,

and we're going to see employment in West Prince.

An Hon. Member: Responsible government.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mill River deal and IRAC

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, parcels are required to be advertised to Islanders for three months prior to selling off-Island.

To the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism on his sweetheart Mill River deal: Why did this deal fail to go to IRAC?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Mr. Trivers: Follow the rules.

Mr. Myers: Nobody up west wants (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is an establishment that has been around for a number of years, and I'm sure everyone in this House at some point in time took their children there.

We, as a government responsible to rural development in PEI, didn't want to see this property go away. We didn't have too many options when this deal was done.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: We either had to make – build up this property to allow it to continue, to allow the investment in West Prince.

There's 200 rooms past Summerside. We could have built a wall and said we're not doing anything with Mill River and shut it down. That would have left 110 units –

Mr. Myers: There's (Indistinct) hotel there.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, I can tell you, the slowest growth region on Prince Edward Island last year was West Prince. If we shut Mill River down –

Mr. Myers: Ten years later.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: – that would be almost immediate –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Liberal lawyer and Mill River deal

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It never went to IRAC for an off-Island purchase, and it was one of the first decisions taken by Cabinet this year.

To the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism on his sweetheart Mill River deal: Which particular Charlottetown Liberal lawyer represented government in this deal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Mr. LaVie: Call the house doctor now.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I'm not 100% sure which firm, because I think there may be more than one, but I can bring that back to the House.

Mr. LaVie: She's sinking.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: What'd I tell you? He'll tell you. Tell them (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, Billy Dow was the legal point man for this government.

Some Hon. Members: Shame, shame!

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism on his sweetheart Mill River deal: How is it after egaming that your government allowed Billy Dow to wear two hats on both sides of another deal?

Some Hon. Members: Shame, shame!

Mr. MacKay: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: I believe, Mr. Speaker, we discussed in the House yesterday about legal professionals and how we do it through procurement, and who specializes in certain areas of law.

If that's what we've chose to do that in law, I think we've come out with a really good deal, and it's unfortunate that the –

Mr. Myers: The lawyers who specialize in backroom deals.

Mr. MacDonald: The opposition continues to talk about doom and gloom and we continue to grow the economy at a rate better than the national average. We're doing a phenomenal job –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: You're sinking.

Mr. MacDonald: We're leading Atlantic Canada and we're leading most parts of the country, and the last meeting I was at of internal trade, the hon. minister Bain said to me, he says: I don't know what you guys are doing down there, but geez, whatever you're doing keep it up. You're successful.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) work for an Islander.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mill River deal and Budget book

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to leave that response alone.

Billy Dow represented government in the sale and also represented government in the Rodd loan thread.

To the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism on his sweetheart Mill River deal: Why are the costs of this sweetheart deal not in your Budget book?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll have an opportunity to discuss that, and you'll have an opportunity to even ask more questions on that through Budget Estimates, because it actually is partially in our Budget book through IPEI and the Department of Tourism, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Consultation with Aboriginals

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, the government is guaranteeing losses, but they are not reflected in the Budget.

To the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism on his sweetheart Mill River deal: Why did you fail to consult the Aboriginal peoples of PEI on this deal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Look –

Mr. Myers: You need a constitutional expert over there. Anybody know one?

Mr. MacDonald: We value our relationship with the Mi'kmaq in advancing socio-economical procedures with them. We've been working very closely with them.

We were advised that we were duty to consult. That's exactly what we've done. We've done it a number of times, and we'll continue down that road, and we continue to value our relationship with the Mi'kmaq people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Value of Mill River property

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, duty to consult is a must; before, not after.

To the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism on his sweetheart Mill River deal: Why did you decide to sell a 90-room full service resort with an 18-hole championship golf course, indoor pool, 90-foot waterslide, whirlpool, sauna, squash courts, tennis courts, restaurant and lounge, 72-site campground, and fun park, and all the land for \$500,000 when your own assessment for the property was worth between \$8-9 million?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me take you back to 2013, when we did an independent study. And it wasn't government that did it – it was a third party; it was a consultant that'd done it – and the capital improvements and the advancements

of that property at that time in 2013, the investment that was required was \$43 million to keep it where it should be.

If you look at the deal that we've made, you look at \$850,000 in losses a year, you look at where the capital expenditure was going to have to be placed in that establishment the golf course, it's over \$6.6 million in 12 years in capital expenditures alone to the campground and to the golf course.

That's not counting the Rodd property, itself.

So, it's pretty easy math to figure it out over a number of years (Indistinct) taxpayers off the hook.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mill River and impact of marketplace

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A question for the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism: When you put together the Mill River sweetheart deal, did this tired Liberal government do any analysis of how pouring millions of dollars into Mill River would impact the marketplace?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Every time you see a Mill River ad somewhere in this country or around the world, it's going to enhance the product of Prince Edward Island.

By closing that property, we would have done detriment to the industry, especially the industry of rural PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: And Charlottetown lawyers. Well, you ruined the Charlottetown lawyer market.

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct) winners.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Consultations with TIAPEI

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm hearing that, in fact, you didn't do any analysis to see how it would impact the market place.

This sweetheart deal has created an uneven playing field by heavily subsidizing one business to the tune of millions of dollars for the next 12 years.

Question for the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism: Did you consult with TIAPEI about the possible impacts of heavily subsidizing the one private tourism operation with millions of dollars in public money?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our government's making investments in the tourism industry all the time. We have a list of grants, and we'll be going over those in Estimates, and they're in every riding and every one of our districts in both sides of this House.

It's a very important industry to us – 6.5% of our GDP, it's \$435 million in revenue.

We continue to progress the tourism on Prince Edward Island, and we will continue to do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Privately-owned tourism businesses and subsidization

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, in fact, there are over 150 businesses in the Cavendish Resort municipality alone in my district, so I will ask you this question, Minister of Economic Development and Tourism: How many other privately-owned tourism businesses are you subsidizing with millions of dollars in public money?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We continue to invest in tourism, whether it's Cavendish, Georgetown, or wherever. The economic development in rural PEI has always been an issue with the opposition. Here when we go and do something good, we get blamed for doing too much. It's a very strategic property in West Prince and we want to keep that strategic property alive.

There's room for tourists. We had 1.5 million visitors here last year. Cavendish wasn't hurting, Georgetown wasn't hurting. West Prince had the lowest numbers of anywhere on Prince Edward Island, even with the ferries closing in the east. They still had the lower numbers.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Subsidizing losses at private business

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're listening to the public. We're listening to our constituents. When the public outcry over your sweetheart deal began, the new owner said that Mill River would rival the Cavendish Resort Municipality.

Minister: Can you explain how spending

millions in public money to subsidize 12 years of losses at a private business will duplicate what has taken over half a century to build?

Mr. Myers: Good question. That's a good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There have been investments in the Cavendish area over a number of years and, actually, on the other hat I wear, we're looking at investments in rural broadband. There's always investment in other areas of the province. You know it's funny because in my other hat, which was immigration, we had seven or eight new entities buy properties in Cavendish. There are always investments in those areas and we'll continue to make investments in those areas.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Following the comments that I referenced earlier, both the Cavendish Resort Municipality and the Tourism Cavendish Beach Inc. they cried foul – rightly so. Calling the comments 'patently absurd' and the whole caper a 'sweetheart deal'.

Question to the tourism minister: Do those comments reflect your tired Liberal government's position on this sweetheart deal?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure how tired we are. We're gearing up for likely one of the biggest tourism seasons that we're ever going to have.

I give kudos to all the industry from one end of the Island to the other and we try to treat them as fairly as possible. When you look at what we've done in the past two years in the department of tourism, we're leading

visitations right across the country. We have a great presence, we have an international presence, we're working on our global markets and we're going to continue to because it's an important industry for PEI and there's not a business on PEI that is not affected by the tourism industry.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's funny that the minister mentioned high speed internet because when this tired Liberal government started feeling heat over its failed sweetheart high-speed Internet deal, this minister suddenly started singing the praises of not interfering in the marketplace.

Mr. Myers: That's true.

Mr. Trivers: Question to the tourism minister: Why are you doing the exact opposite when it comes to this latest sweetheart deal from your tired Liberal government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: That's a great question. They can't help themselves. They're Liberals. They like to meddle.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The economy of Prince Edward Island is the best it's been in a number of years. We've got close to \$400 million investment; 60% of that investment is in rural PEI.

We're working with – we've seen what we've done with SRDC and CADC. There are no boundaries in economic development in Prince Edward Island. We're small enough right now that we have to work with everybody and that's exactly what this government is doing. We're aggressive in our economic development platform. We're doing as much as we can possibly do and the results are fact, not opinion.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If this tired Liberal government were serious about growth, instead of sweetheart deals, then you'd really tackle the high speed internet issue.

Question to the tourism minister: If you had millions of tax dollars burning a hole in your pocket, wouldn't addressing high-speed Internet access have more direct benefit for the entire tourism industry?

An Hon. Member: There you go.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think he must have missed – he couldn't have heard me when I said we're working with a community in his riding on rural broadband and internet services. We're working with all the ISPs –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Hon. member (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: We're working with all ISPs and I've stated before in this House that some of the ISP came back to us and said – told the government to stay out of it.

Well, you know what? I'm a responsible minister for the taxpayers of PEI. We want the best service possible in internet solutions. Every province in Canada is dealing with this, but PEI is going to be a leader in it because by the end of next year, we're going to be at 99% at 5 megabytes per second or better.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Fracking omitted from Water Act

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

The draft Water Act that is currently being reviewed in public consultations does not deal with the issue of hydraulic fracturing or fracking. This issue was raised by many Islanders during previous consultations and we have a motion before the floor from the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald calling for a ban of fracking.

A question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Why was fracking omitted from the new Water Act?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Good question.

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

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

Truly it is a pleasure to rise and talk about the process of the Water Act, which we are now in our second area of public consultations all across PEI. Certainly, I am well aware as minister of the conversations that have been at those meetings and several of the members that sit on the floor of the legislature have been at those meetings to hear them as well.

The issue of hydraulic fracturing on Prince Edward Island has been brought forward in the initial rounds of the consultations and again, there's discussion on the second round and I've indicated to those people that discussions will continue as we work on regulations, even after the draft act becomes passed on the floor of the Legislature. Those details of that can be worked on through regulation – and I'm committed to do that with the great folks across Prince Edward Island to take their concerns and work with them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Public consultations on Water Act

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks so much, Mr. Speaker.

Several groups involved in water issues on the Island are wondering why the final consultation process for the new Water Act is so short – it's barely a month – when the minister had previously recognized the need to, in your words, get this right.

A question to the minister: Why is this final round of consultations so much shorter than the previous one?

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

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

This process that we've developed of public consultation on the Water Act, and how all Islanders are concerned about protection of the quality and quantity of our water, our most precious natural resource for not only our generation, but generations to follow. All indicators have been that this process has been phenomenal.

We've taken almost 20 months to do the first part. It's been well informed to me that the draft act that has presented has brought much of the view of Islanders have brought forward and they're very pleased the way it looks in that draft act. We certainly do have a lot of work once we get that – as we move out on the rest of the consultations and I look forward to those.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

In the past, the minister certainly has been accommodating and he has slowed down the engagement process for which many of the people who made presentations and submissions were grateful and acknowledged that. But the groups involved in water say that they need more time to analyze this 38 page act, minister. Not something you can analyze quickly or easily. And developing good policy, as you've said, does indeed take time and it should not be rushed.

Will the minister commit to extending this final public engagement period for the Water Act?

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

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

The consultations thus far have been extensive. I have indicated to everybody that those details of those specific things will be dealt with in regulation. We have up to 18 months now to work on that. It certainly hasn't been a rushed process.

If the hon. member would like to attend one of the meetings, he would hear from the people that are at the mic that they are very happy with what they see in the draft act and we'll continue that process as very collaborative and consulting with Islanders and it's been fully reflective so far and it will continue. There is no rush, hon. member. We are doing it in its justified time and working towards the end of the process.

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

Electronic supervision of offenders

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety. In February of 2016, a one-year project began with your department to test electronic supervision of offenders.

Premier: Is your department considering making this program a permanent method of correctional service that can be used to create accountability of offenders?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question.

We are, indeed. The department and government are considering the permanent option of the tool of electronic monitoring based on a review of the electronic supervision pilot project and recommendations will be put forward for

our next steps. That would be expected to take place by summertime and in that process there will be feedback from justice partners as well as departmental personnel and my understanding is that the view of that pilot project today has been very positive.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These ankle bracelets allow more offenders to be supervised in the community, which would appear to be a more cost-effective solution for some inmates. Does the Premier have any data regarding the cost savings to the taxpayers if this program is implemented on a permanent basis?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That will be one of the questions that will be taken into consideration as we review the pilot project. It is, indeed, the case that there are savings related to the technology itself or to the electronic bracelets, and that does reduce demand on custody facilities.

Over time, we also have to take a look at what is involved in community-based supervision and support programs to reintegrate offenders. But, the objective and beyond the actual dollars becomes an assessment of the improved outcomes for offenders and for the community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Does the Premier see electronic monitoring helping offenders integrate into the community?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

In principle, the gradual and supervised return of offenders to the community has been shown to be more effective for the offenders, and for their families, and safer for the community and the public.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Midwifery services

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Minister, everyone in the House is aware that I tabled a petition in the fall sitting of the Legislature to regulate and fund midwifery services on Prince Edward Island.

How close are we to having midwifery services here on the Island?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point has been a very passionate advocate for midwifery services here in Prince Edward Island and in that vein and because of her advocacy, we have entered into consultations with a number of organizations, small healthcare professions and the midwifery association is one of them. Those consultations, hopefully, will lead to a new registered healthcare professions act. That would be something that we're looking at.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister: Will you explain what the registered health professions act is, how midwifery fits in the act and when can we see it coming to the floor of the Legislature?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

The healthcare professions act is, the registered healthcare professions act, is an act that's going to help regulate a number of smaller professions that deliver healthcare services in Prince Edward Island. Groups that don't have a large enough association to regulate themselves, and the midwife association could be a group that would be affiliated with that and we are going through the legislative process on that and we hope to be tabling that legislation here in the Legislature this spring sitting.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Support of new registered health professions act

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Born Cooperative, an advocacy group for midwives on Prince Edward Island, has launched an online petition asking all MLAs to support the new registered health professions act. Minister, I will be supporting the registered health professions act. Will you?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, as Minister of Health and Wellness in the Province of Prince Edward Island, I think it's important that we make sure that the delivery of many healthcare services by our healthcare professions are done in an effective, safe and responsible

manner and this registered healthcare professions act will allow for that to happen here, and should the midwife association be one of the organizations that wants to apply to that act –

Mr. LaVie: Answer the question.

Mr. Henderson: – we will definitely be supporting that here as minister, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) giving you the runaround.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Legal costs for Cornwall bypass

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

Question to the minister of transportation: Minister, how much has your department spent to date on legal costs for the Cornwall bypass project?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Trans Canada Highway extension is an extensive project that is going to generate millions of dollars into the GDP for Prince Edward Island; \$42.9 million. It's going to create 502 person years of employment, and it's going to bring tax revenues of \$8.3 million into this province.

That's not the only project we're investing in. We have four tenders out for every –

Mr. LaVie: Answer the question.

Ms. Biggar: – part of this Island, which is \$24 million. We are injecting water and wastewater projects across 29 communities, which will be over \$60 million and we are

contributing to the economy to making jobs for people across PEI.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister, unfortunately, did not answer my question until the very end when she said she's investing – infusing lots of millions of dollars into the economy, and I would have to say that's by paying millions of dollars to lawyers. Once you start using lawyers to force expropriation, the bills pile up quickly.

Question to the minister: How much does your department expect to pay in legal costs for arbitration following your attempts to expropriate land?

Mr. Trivers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we initially decided to go forward with this project, we looked at our policies around the expropriation. We took one to Executive Council, which was approved, and we have followed that process to a T. We own, already, 25% of the property on that particular Trans Canada Highway extension. There are 24 others to be acquired –

Mr. Trivers: How much did you pay (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – 50% of those have either been acquired or are under negotiation and we will continue to work with all property owners.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's no secret to anyone here in this House that the *Expropriation Act* here on Prince Edward Island is the most outdated *Expropriation Act* of any in all of Canada.

Again, question to the minister of transportation: Will the legal work being handled be done by government lawyers or outside counsel?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we enter into negotiations with property owners there is a process, again, that's put in place. There is an option to use an independent appraiser. We continue to work on that on different projects in acquiring and negotiations. Things are still under negotiation with a number of properties, so when we're all done we'll be able to have a fuller idea of what those particular negotiations will entail.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: The question (Indistinct) government (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Resources for community organizations

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

The province's mental health strategy talks a lot about the need for more resources for community organizations and private-sector partners.

Question to the minister of health: Minister, do you still endorse that sentiment?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, we, in the Department of Health and Wellness and through Health PEI work extensively with many different organizations that help deliver mental healthcare services in this province, including the Canadian Mental Health Association. We have also created a number of different supports for people suffering from mental health and we'll continue to work with those organizations in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Community mental health supports

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

The Hughes-Jones Centre is a non-profit that provides horse therapy services to a number of vulnerable groups and individuals.

Again, question to the minister of health: Do you agree that groups like these add value to our community mental health supports?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Trivers: Easy question.

Mr. Aylward: Yes or no.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, we always work with different organizations dealing with various situations that help individuals and organizations across Prince Edward Island.

I'm not as familiar with that particular organization and what it actually does, but I know we do work with various organizations and they provide great valued service in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Displacing Hughes-Jones Centre

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

I would urge this minister of health to get caught up with his responsibilities and to know what services are available out there and what resources are available, whether they fall directly under his department or if they compliment services that may be provided by his department.

Horse therapy is a widely recognized practice that benefits many groups like; at-risk youth; people suffering from PTSD; people with disabilities, and those with social anxieties.

Question to the minister of health: How will destroying a horse farm that provides preventative mental health services make more community resources available?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very well aware of the work that has been happening at the Hughes-Jones Centre over the years.

With this particular property, as well as several other properties, we have initially offered to relocate that particular property. We have entered into a lease so that that property owner can stay there until May of 2018.

We have also entered into leases with other property owners so that they have time to relocate. We are not starting that project immediately. It will be started this fall so there will be lots of time for people to relocate and I will continue to work with the other property owners to negotiate those sales.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would go back to my last question, again, because I was hoping to get an answer from the health minister, but he probably wouldn't be forthcoming, so I'm move on.

The Hughes-Jones Centre doesn't get government funding for their services, and they aren't looking for any.

Question to the minister of health: Why would your tired Liberal government displace and destroy a viable working partner in the community?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) to work.

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, again, as I noted, with this particular property, we entered into discussions with them at their request last fall. We continue those discussions. We went externally with appraisals for those properties. We have worked with them to ensure that they have adequate time. We offered to relocate that property to other property to offer to work together.

We are glad that they have entered into a lease so that they have time to relocate and to transition their property to another location. We will continue to work with them in that regard.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

Groups like the Hughes-Jones Centre actually save government money in the long run by providing much needed community mental health supports.

I'm going to go directly to the transportation minister because unfortunately the health minister doesn't seem to be able to answer the question, so we'll go directly to the transportation minister who wants to try to answer everything.

Minister of transportation: Why does your tired Liberal government put a higher value on asphalt than supporting vulnerable young Islanders?

Mr. Trivers: Very nice (Indistinct) question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: It's the Island cultural fund (Indistinct)

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) cousin.

Ms. Biggar: The investments we're making through infrastructure across this Island goes back into the pockets of Islanders because they are employed in the projects that we are doing right across this Island –

Leader of the Opposition: So that's more important than children.

Ms. Biggar: – in every community across PEI. We continue to work with organizations, as well, that provide supports to families.

Through the investments that my department is making in Islanders, in projects, in communities, it will engage more Islanders through the workforce, in turn adding to the income of those families –

Mr. Myers: One family anyway –

Ms. Biggar: – and we will continue to invest –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) –

Ms. Biggar: – in projects that are needed –

Mr. Myers: – the Premier's family.

Ms. Biggar: – across the Island.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-

Kinlock, your final question.

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

It simply comes down to priorities.

Again, question to the transportation minister: Wouldn't the money you'll spend on lawyers expropriating the Hughes-Jones Centre be better invested into frontlines community mental health supports like the one you're destroying?

Leader of the Opposition: That's right.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very clear. We have worked hand in hand with this particular business to offer to relocate, offered different pieces of land as part of our negotiations. We have entered into a deal in terms of a lease to the present property and if people decide they do not want to take particular offers that is their prerogative. We have worked in good faith with all of the property owners. We will continue to work with all the property owners.

We, again, will work with that property owner if they so wish to choose to work with us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]