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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

THURSDAY, 27 APRIL 2017

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I waited for a second there because I thought the minister of transportation was coming with the evaluation of that property, but it didn't happen.

For 129 years Old Home Week has been a Prince Edward Island tradition drawing thousands of visitors from near and far. It's the biggest agricultural fair in Atlantic Canada and the Gold Cup and Saucer is one of the top harness races in North America.

Jeopardy of Old Home Week

Question to the minister of rural development: How is your tired Liberal government allowed things to get in such a state where Old Home Week is in jeopardy of being cancelled for 2017?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

I'll take that because it falls under my portfolio with regards to the agriculture piece of it and as well as the Women's Institute piece.

This is the jewel of Prince Edward Island in the middle of the summer. We have the opportunity to bring our cattle; bring our animals into the exhibition; compete against the others; the best on the Island. We also encourage people from other provinces to come and exhibit against us.

The Women's Institute takes crafts, vegetables, flowers in there. This is a jewel and we have to keep it coming.

It's the spring of the year. There is a little bump in the road at the present time. But, as

every other bump in the road is fixed, we'll fix this one, too.

We have –

Mr. LaVie: Oh, come on –

Mr. McIsaac: – met on this issue this morning –

Mr. LaVie: – (Indistinct) bumps in the road.

Mr. McIsaac: – and we will smooth this out.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm asking the minister of rural development because it is a rural issue and you had your chance. When you had your chance you basically told them that they were going to have to bend, and that's not going to happen.

A centerpiece of Old Home Week is the Provincial Exhibition, which showcases our proud agricultural traditions and future.

This year's addition is slated to have the largest poultry show in the Maritimes and one of the largest Ayrshire Shows in Canada with a judge coming from Australia.

Question to the minister of rural development: Do you think cancelling Old Home Week sends a message that your tired Liberal government supports rural Prince Edward Island?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, we have heard it over and over again since this session started from the other side: the sky is falling.

The sky is not falling. This is the jewel of PEI. We are going to work together and get this going. There is a bump in the road at the present time. It will be fixed up.

We have to have this jewel in the summer. We have to have the Women's Institute involved. We have to have the Ayreshire (Indistinct) which terrific to see that expanded.

We have a large Holstein show. It's the middle show of the three. We have a spring show in Fredericton; a summer show in Charlottetown; the fall show in Halifax.

It has to happen. It will be happening in Charlottetown. We'll work together and fix this issue.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: Should have been fixed before this.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now, it's funny for the minister to come in here and talk such tough talk when he met with the group himself. The talk was tough, but he was telling him that they were going to have to suck it up.

He wouldn't stand up to Atlantic Lottery Corporation. He wouldn't stand up to Red Shores. He wouldn't stop them from getting bullied around by a government organization.

Funding cut to exhibitions

Question to the minister of agriculture: How can you say you support events like Old Home Week when your tired Liberal government has cut funding to Island exhibitions by more than a third?

More than a third in the last three years?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, there was no bullying on this side of the House. The only

bullying I hear is from the other side over there.

We meet on a regular basis. We put funding into the exhibition association. They decide where the dollars go from one exhibition to the other.

We put extra dollars in last year to keep this thing float. And it was good. We had a great exhibition. We will have another great exhibition this summer.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) for you in a minute.

Mr. Myers: The last three years, 36% cut in the last three years. 36% cut you guys gave them in the last three years.

Question to the minister of agriculture: Do you think exhibitions across the Island are feeling your support when you have cut their funding by 36% in three years?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

We actually did put more money in last year. We do put lots of support out there to all the exhibition associations. We will continue to do that because we want to continue to see what the Women's Institute can put forward to there. My wife actually competes in that. I'm sure she would want to see it keep going as well.

We do support that. We support the agricultural industry in many ways. We'll continue to do that. Our agricultural people love coming; showing their Holstein cattle in town, as well as the Ayreshires.

The other beauty of it is we are bringing agriculture and the rural area to the city so that people there can come and see our Ayreshires. Come and see our Holsteins.

Come and see our beef cattle. The 4-Hers come, as well.

It's a terrific tradition. We get the opportunity to show to each other and to the city folks that hey, this is what's happening in rural PEI and when things are going well in rural PEI, things are going well right across the province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, from a guy who lives in rural PEI I know full well that we have absolutely no support from this tired Liberal government and we've seen it time and time again.

It's funny that the minister has such great vigour on this issue, but he won't stand up to Atlantic Lottery Corporation and all the bigwigs. Like the bigwig over at Red Shores that told them that he makes his living of other people's losses and this doesn't bother him a bit. Funny, eh?

Impact on tourism re: Old Home Week

Question to the minister of tourism: If Old Home Week doesn't go ahead will it have a negative impact on tourism on PEI?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Why are we going to that set, Mr. Speaker?

Nothing has been cancelled as of yet. The suggestion is, by the board, that we have to look at something different and we actually met together, some of the ministers, to look at this in a preliminary fashion on what we could do to go forward.

We got the message last night from the board. We met again this morning already. We will work this out. Don't kill the issue before it's dead.

Mr. LaVie: Should have worked it out before now.

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I saw the MQO poll yesterday that shows that this Premier has drug you guys down 25% in the last 10 months. You can't tell me that Islanders are feeling your support. You can't tell me that Islanders feel like you guys are behind them, and you can't tell me that the Old Home Week board thinks you guys are behind them.

I met with them last night, as did the member from Stratford. I know the story. I was there. I know what happened. I know what you said. I know what you said. I know what you said; I know how much support they got from you guys.

Question, again, to the minister of tourism: If Old Home Week doesn't go ahead will it be a black eye for the Island tourism industry?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, again, this is a jewel that we are working on.

We have to keep it going. We are expecting the biggest year ever in tourism. We're expecting another great year in agriculture. We're expecting another great year in fisheries, and we have to have this jewel in place so we can show everyone what exactly is happening in PEI. Don't be so bullyish and negative. This thing is going to work out. Okay? Don't kill the issue right off the bat. Work with us if you have some great ideas.

We're going to make this thing work whether you help us or not, but we would ask you to come on side with us.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure that I'm being the bullyish one. I'm not sure that bringing this issue to the House was because of some action of mine. It was the inaction of you is why this is on the floor today. You guys had all kinds of time to (Indistinct) – you want to talk about bullying, talk about the 400 tickets that Old Home Week is being forced to give the Red Shores bunch; talk about how they are trying to cut down a third of the parking lot so they can roll in their big gambling buddies so they can pull up; talk about one of the managers over there saying he makes his living off other people's losses. Come on. Come on, folks. That's not Island talk. That's not the way Islanders talk about Islanders with gambling problems.

Jeopardy of Old Home Week

Question to the minister responsible for harness racing: Where do you stand on the idea of Old Home Week being cancelled?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

As minister responsible for harness racing on PEI, I have been absolutely proud and pleased to have been an invited guest to sit at a table of partners regarding Old Home Week since last December. Those meetings have been very productive as they move forward, right from December. There was an agreement document that has been circulating back and forth and was – most of the topics had agreements made and basically we're ready, in my opinion, to reach the ink process.

What happened this morning and last night, I'm very saddened by that because agreements were in the works. Solutions were being found to some issues that they were working through. This is a big year for harness racing in Prince Edward Island, but the World Driver Championship, the World Trotting Conference here, and this will be a successful season of racing during Gold Cup Week, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I'm going to go back to this whole topic and the minister of communities, he has been involved with this and I know he has been involved with them. He was at the meeting and he was actually at the meeting where it was actually suggested that the event gets moved on without all the organizers, without the people who have been volunteering; a volunteer organization that's nearly 130 years old and you didn't stand up for them.

Mr. Mitchell: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: No you didn't.

Mr. Mitchell: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: You could have stood up for them and you didn't.

Mr. Mitchell: – ask the question then.

Red Shores and Old Home Week Committee

Mr. Myers: Question: Do you support Red Shores bullying the Old Home Week committee?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let's be clear here. I, like every other Islander in Prince Edward Island, know full well that Old Home Week is a tradition on

Prince Edward Island that brings my family and all families home from other provinces to Prince Edward Island, all up through the United States.

This has been a 130-year tradition that we are very proud of in Prince Edward Island and I'm going to tell you, this group has been working collectively to ensure that continues not only for 2017, but for future years.

Agreements were worked on, were discussed and we're very close to become part of fruition. This tradition is very important to Islanders. It's very important to me as minister responsible for one of the partners in it and we will work collectively to try to get everything worked out because this event is important. It's an important year. We have a lot of people coming to Prince Edward Island for what's going to be a fantastic show with the World Driver Championship. This thing will be done and we'll get moving forward.

This tradition is important to all Islanders, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: Not saying when or where.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The member from Souris is right. The minister isn't saying where. He isn't saying when. He isn't saying when.

Mr. LaVie: Exactly.

Mr. Myers: He's being quite elusive. Islanders can see through this. I'm going to go to the Premier because you know what? The Premier doesn't mind going over to Old Home Week when he has an opportunity to climb up on top of a horse to get his picture taken. He thinks that Old Home Week is an opportunity for some folksy photo op, but to me Old Home Week is way more than that. Old Home Week has been a part of my family tradition since I was a child too, and it was one of the parts of summer that –

Ms. Biggar: Question.

Mr. Myers: – I always looked forward to as a child.

You had your chance to answer questions yesterday and you bumbled every one of them. Can I have the floor right now?

Mr. LaVie: Never mind your power trip.

Mr. Myers: Or do you have another piece of land you want to sell for \$13,000 an acre?

Mr. LaVie: Never mind the power trip.

Mr. Myers: I'm talking about a serious issue here.

Mr. J. Brown: Power trip, you're on one now.

Mr. Myers: This Premier has the full power to make this go away. This Premier can waltz right into Atlantic Lottery Corporation, which we're a full partner of, and tell them that they have to cooperate, that it's time for them to cooperate and it's time for them to make a deal, and it has to be a long-term deal so we don't have to be put through the ringer; the poor people at Old Home Week who volunteer all of their time don't have to be put through the ringer over and over again.

Government support of Old Home Week

Question to the Premier: If you wanted to make sure Old Home Week stays on the rail, you do have the power to do it. Why won't you use that power?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, this is a collaborative table, as the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and the minister responsible for harness racing have indicated.

Old Home Week is a great tradition. I don't know exactly what the hon. member has in mind when he talks about me being on top of a horse, but we did show ponies at the exhibition many years ago and we go and see the crafts and see the baking and the awards and the Women's Institute and the

racing, and it's a great time for everybody; Islanders, visitors and everybody to be proud of what we have in all aspects of this great show and it's going to go ahead.

The way it's going to go ahead is in the partnership that has made it work for 130 years and I'm proud to continue to support that and so is our government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I know that this Premier has his fingers in everything. They're calling him 'fingers' in around government because his fingers in everything.

I'm going to ask the Premier today: Will you come back to this House tomorrow, commit to come back to this House tomorrow, tell us that there is a solution; that Old Home Week won't be cancelled and that there is a long-term agreement so that the good volunteers of Old Home Week don't have to go through this ever again?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, this question tells the whole story; complaining about the way the Premier supposedly runs everything and the other hand saying: Come back with the answer tomorrow.

We got elected on a program to work together and that's exactly what the partners in Old Home Week and with the racing community, and with our government and with the farming community that will be there, and the Women's Institute and everybody is going to be there working together and they'll make the solution, and it will be the greatest year ever for Old Home Week and for racing, and for visitors and for Islanders and I look forward to being the Premier that's proud of how Islanders work together to make that a great show.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Hillsborough Hospital replacement

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The calls to replace Hillsborough Hospital have been many and have been ongoing for years. In fact, this government budgeted \$5 million for it back in 2014. In estimates this week we found out that 2019 would be the earliest we might see an announcement on Hillsborough Hospital.

Question to the minister of health: Is 2019 just going to bring us an announcement or a real facility?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to issues around the Hillsborough Hospital, as we stated on the floor of the Legislature here doing a five-hour marathon on questioning, we have a committee already in place. That committee is doing a review of what types of services would be delivered there. They are working hard to start to put together plans, and I also would note here, we've have already invested some money that is possibly going to be able to be transferred in security equipment that we are installing there at the moment.

Plans are well underway for 2019 to get some announcements and some work done there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister's right, we did ask questions for that long because it's important. We're going to keep asking these questions.

Your latest mental health strategy says: There's a need to replace the Hillsborough Hospital, or determine a better way to provide psychiatric services in existing facilities.

Minister, this doesn't sound like a firm commitment. Is there a chance that you won't replace the facility?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the delivery of psychiatric services for Islanders who have mental issues, we are continuing to work at a whole number of different issues that are involved with that. It's not all about locations in one spot for one types of services. Once again, we are continuing to meet the needs of Islanders when it comes to issues around psychiatric needs that they might have.

Once again, there's a committee in place that has put together the planning stages – and it's very hard for me to presume exactly what those recommendations are going to be when it comes to a location of service, and all of those types of situations there, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister said it today and he said it again in Estimates that they're looking at other places, looking in the community. You speak about community mental health as an alternative. Minister, from your own mental health strategy it says: The average wait time in community mental health for adults triaged as urgent to see a psychiatrist was 75 days and 16 days to see a mental health provider. That's in 2014-2015.

Minister: Community mental health is already overburdened. What are you doing to find a better balance?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. MacEwen: The hon. member would well be aware that, once again, all these different services are services that people would need at certain point in times in their treatment based on the illness and severity of their situation. We have a lot of challenges when it comes to the way we deliver health care services when it comes to mental health. We readily acknowledge that, but it's all those different services – what we deal with in community mental health, what we deal with in psychiatric services, and what we deal with in forensics and some of those types of issues that we're dealing with – we have to put this all together and we have to make sure that we're meeting the needs of Islanders as we move forward into the future.

Plans are well underway. Monies are already been spent in the delivery of health care services when it comes to issues around the Hillsborough Hospital and we will continue those plans and, once again, committees are there to see how those plans will evolve.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Youth in-patient psychiatric unit

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In 2014, this government promised a youth in-patient psychiatric unit. I have it right here. It says: Launch the new dedicated youth mental health unit in Charlottetown with 12 beds.

Minister: Why did you break this promise?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, some of the things that we've done regarding these types of issues is that, once again, the Strength Program that we're dealing with not only is based on addictions, but it's also based on mental health issues.

We have an in-patient unit at QEH that deals with adolescent youth issues and there are beds associated with that. As well as what we have at the Hillsborough Hospital. Once

again, these issues – they're evolving. We're working and dealing with the issues as they come forward and I can assure Islanders that they are getting mental health services that are as good as anywhere else in this country.

Mr. Aylward: Oh my god.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And then we saw the Treasury Board go and approve \$500,000 for this project, but Health PEI had to drop the idea of the in-patient unit because there was so little budgeted for it. In fact, at the Standing Committee on Health last year, when asked about the 12 bed in-patient unit, your director said, and I quote: However, we could not secure a reasonable location that was within our budget.

Minister: Why won't you make it a priority?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, we are always looking at all the issues pertaining to the delivery of health care services. They're all priorities, and we are working towards delivering those types of services and if you look at our mental health strategy, we are focusing on young people, children and that's some of the announcements that we've made recently in conjunction with the department of education.

We're looking at making sure we have access to the right service and treatment and support, that is all in our mental health strategy, and try to make sure we're fostering a good situation around recovery and wellbeing in this province. As the whole system works together in a collaborative approach, we'll deliver health care service in this province when we can and as best we can.

Mr. Aylward: It's already too late.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Reducing carbon emissions/carbon tax

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

In his year-end interview with *The Guardian*, the Premier laid out his vision on a fiscally-neutral carbon tax, combined with measures to reduce the impacts to low-income Islanders as part of an overall plan to reduce emissions. This plan seemed to find a balance between social, economic, and environmental responsibility, while being sensitive to the particular needs of our province. In short, it was something I felt I could get behind.

Now, we seem to be resigned to whatever Ottawa will impose upon us.

A question to the Minister of Finance: Why has government's plan on carbon pricing changed?

Mr. LaVie: Good question. That's a good one.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to say that the government's plan on carbon pricing has not changed. We know that the federal government is imposing carbon pricing –

Mr. Myers: It's always (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: – on all the provinces across the country. Here on Prince Edward Island, we're just being cautious about how we're going to proceed with it. We want to make sure that our strategy aligns with other strategies that are coming out on climate change and energy. We'll be looking at that and following that very closely.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

The new carbon pricing approach seems to be a surrender of our gift of jurisdiction. Rather than exert leadership and develop a made in Prince Edward Island plan that meets the specific needs of Islanders, we

will wait and see what Ottawa or other impose on us – whether that's a locally appropriate solution or not.

A question to the minister: Wouldn't it be better to take control of our own carbon policy rather than let others dictate it to us?

Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think at any time did we say that we were going to let anyone else – federal or anyone else – dictate to us what our carbon pricing is going to look like.

What we did say was that we were going to be very careful and cautious and prudent about how we're going to move forward with it to make sure that it doesn't unnecessarily harm low to medium-income Islanders and that it is going to go align with the two strategies that I mentioned in my previous answer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

The experience in European countries with long-established carbon prices shows that in order for such a policy to be effective in reducing emissions, it has to be high enough to be impactful – to incentivize people to change their behaviours.

Sweden, for example, has the highest carbon tax in the world – about \$150 a tonne. They've seen substantial emission reductions and stable economic growth.

A question to the minister: Do you think that \$10 per tonne carbon price will have a major impact on the PEI economy?

Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do note that on a number of occasions the hon. Leader of the Third Party has mentioned countries in Europe. Now he's

mentioned one that's got the highest carbon price, and I have no intention, at least while I'm sitting in this chair, of equaling that here on Prince Edward Island.

I do note that the carbon pricing that begins off – it starts off at around \$10 and over time that will increase as, not only Prince Edward Islanders, but as people across the country start to think more about reducing the use of fossil fuels across the country. I don't think we have to come in immediately and implement such a big number and impose that on Prince Edward Islanders.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Snowbirds accessing provincial healthcare

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is for the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness. Minister, it has been brought to my attention that provinces across Canada have different policies pertaining to the length of time their residents can be absent from their provinces and still access provincial health care. Currently, snowbirds for Prince Edward Island can only be away for six months, while our neighbors: New Brunswick it's seven months; Nova Scotia, seven months; and Newfoundland and Labrador it's eight months.

What is Prince Edward Island doing to ensure our residents have the same freedom of travel as other Canadians?

Mr. LaVie: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The member is correct in identifying that Health PEI does provide health care coverage to Islanders when they leave this province for a six month period. But, I do

caution people when they are travelling outside of Canada, the coverage is for emergency and sudden illness types of services.

I would sort of say that it's very important that it be aware for those travelling outside of the country that some of the medical costs are much higher in other locations comparable to Prince Edward Island. We reimburse people at the Island rate in Canadian Dollars.

It's always prudent advice that anyone travelling outside of the province should –

Mr. LaVie: Time limit.

Mr. Henderson: – make sure that they have private insurance just to be sure that everything goes smoothly in their trip –

Mr. LaVie: Seven months.

Mr. Henderson: – as far as the situation goes we are monitoring the situation with other provinces currently, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: Seven months.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Henderson: Six.

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

Health insurance while out-of-province

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know most of the snowbirds that I have spoken to on this issue are fully aware of their rights with regards to insurance while they're out of province.

What they want to know is, most of the majority of the provinces, you can be away for seven months.

Has there been a cost analysis to compare a resident being out of province for an extra month and the cost while they're in the province an accessing our health care?

Mr. LaVie: Not another study?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. LaVie: Don't stand up and say study.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, although we have been monitoring what other provinces are doing, and the hon. member is correct that there are eight other provinces that have extended the seven months.

At this point in time in the province it's – I wouldn't put it as our highest priority, but we are monitoring the situation and we will be reviewing those things in a period of time.

As far as a specific study? No, we have not done a specific study regarding that.

Mr. LaVie: How long have you been studying it? How long?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the minister just stated, that there hasn't been any analysis done or a study done to find out why other provinces allow freedom of travel for their residents.

Minister: Will you undertake to find out why you can do it in other provinces and not in Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. LaVie: Sure (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have had the honour and a chance to speak with the chairpersons of the Canadian Snowbird Association and representatives from Prince Edward Island on the subject.

Once again, I would say that we will be monitoring this situation, but we do have many challenges in health care delivery in this province –

Mr. LaVie: Oh, I can't imagine.

Mr. Henderson: – and we will monitor the situation. I will talk to my department to see what the possibilities of doing a more in depth analysis would be on the subject, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

A+ Program for Westisle Family of Schools

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture indicated that there was funding in his new budget for the A+ Program for the Westisle Family of Schools.

Can the minister tell us what this will mean for West Prince children and their families?

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

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

I have said numerous times that our department of education, the Public School Branch is extremely committed to a progressive, inclusive educational practice.

Currently, in this province we have 11 alternate education programs to respond to the needs of students and transitioning them back to mainstream education.

We are pleased to announce that we will be implementing an A+ Program. An A+ Program is designed from K-6. Currently, right now we have three; one in Charlottetown and one in Summerside and one in the eastern part of the province.

We are pleased that we will be rolling out an A+ Program for children and families in the K-6 system in the western part of the province.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question, again, to the same minister: Minister, how much funding is in your budget for this particular project? How will it be used and will it create any new positions?

Mr. R. Brown: Good question.

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

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

As I indicated on the floor yesterday with our budget we'll be investing over \$100,000 to hire a new teacher and a new youth services worker to implement the A+ Program, which will provide supports and transitions for children, who are currently, for whatever reason, are not in the mainstream system.

We are also very pleased that we do have an alternate program at the intermediate level and the high school level in the western part of the province. We have got the three levels of alternate education programs that will be implemented in full swing this September.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When I, or I should say, when we met with the principals during the school review process, the principals of the Westisle Family of Schools, they thought it was a great opportunity to voice what they needed in their schools.

I'm very glad that the minister listened to what they asked for. This is just one of the announcements of several that is going to go back into the Westisle Family of Schools and I want to thank you for you that.

Minister: Is this the first program of its kind of Westisle and the Westisle Family of Schools?

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

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

Certainly, we did listen. We're very proud that the conversations around the alternative education at the elementary level came out loud and clear through the Principals Councils and as well as my colleagues in the western part of the province as well. They were very vocal and were very adamant that they wanted to have those services.

The District Advisory Councils have spoken very loudly and we have responded. This will be the first A+ Program at the K-6 level at this point in time, but we will continue to support the alternate program at the intermediate and the senior level. We've got a full level from K-12 of alternate education in the western region as of this September, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Seven groups interested in provincial golf courses

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In 2012, this tired Liberal government received seven responses from interested parties over the provincial golf courses.

To the minister of economic development: Will you please name the seven interested groups?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No, I don't have that information on hand. I would have to bring it back.

As is obvious, you're reading the editorial this morning. At least some people are on side in relevance to the good move that we made –

Mr. Myers: Did you write it?

Mr. MacDonald: – in Mill River –

Mr. Myers: Sounds like you wrote it.

Mr. MacDonald: – and I'm sure that's the path we're going down.

I continuously to be supported on the street on this move, it's a good move for the tourism industry. As the minister responsible and all the good things that are going to happen in 2017 and going back four years or going back eight years or whatever it is, is doom and gloom and this government is pushing forward, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You'll have to forgive Islanders for really wanting to get down to the bottom of this because we see over and over again the decisions made by this government.

Seven interested groups responded to government's golf course EOI in 2012. Seven groups, how many of those seven groups were interested in buying the adjoining Rodd properties?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Maybe it's the same groups that applied for Dundarave when that deal was done. I don't know. I would have to bring that back to the House.

This morning, having the opportunity to celebrate 150, the 150th year of Confederation alongside the 20th anniversary of the Confederation Bridge and some of the new festivals and events; lobster fest in Souris; paddling in Victoria; Stompin' Tom in West Prince, again.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: Realizing, the West Point Lighthouse, for example, up 250 room nights already.

Mr. Aylward: Wow.

Mr. MacDonald: I surely hope that those people go to Mill River to golf.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Over all the other private golf courses, of course.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know this government likes to party. We know that.

Mr. Myers: Oh, yes they do.

Ms. Compton: But we want to do some work around there and we want answers –

Mr. LaVie: Especially, all the partying you're tired looking.

Ms. Compton: Not one of the seven –

Mr. LaVie: Tired looking.

Ms. Compton: – interested groups, including Don McDougall, wanted to purchase attached Rodd properties. They were prepared to work with Rodd's.

Minister: How many of these companies wanted one course? How many wanted a combination of courses? How many wanted all four courses?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: I'm glad the hon. member mentioned Don McDougall, Mr. Speaker.

I think most of us all owe Mr. McDougall a round of applause actually in reference to

what he has done for West Prince and what his intentions are for that property.

It's tough. You know this morning I met with four Chinese companies that are interested in bringing their business here. It's tough to prospect when continuously you hear the negative impact of the opposition –

Mr. Myers: Ronnie McKinley's against you, too.

Mr. MacDonald: – and sometimes I feel like I'm in a bouncy castle going from one side to the other because some of the information that provided going back to 2012 or 2008. It's continual doom and gloom.

We have so much good things going on right across this province. I know it's hard to accept in the opposition.

You know what? It's a good time right now to be on PEI, and 2017 is looking very good.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

EOI responses

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: He gets it.

Ms. Compton: On this side of the House we wouldn't have to ask these questions if this government would have just followed the rules and would continue to follow the rules, but we see that is not possible; over and over again.

Back to the questions I'm asking here. These seven potential groups were only interested in either one or all of the courses; one or all. Minister: Were these EOI responses geared more towards leasing or buying the courses?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We work with many different businesses in this portfolio from one end of the province to the other. In the hon. member's own riding, we worked with Belfast Highland Greens and the campground and making sure that continued on and grew in that community and become very successful under the good guidance of Keir White.

We'll continue to make those investments and we'll make decisions that take the taxpayers off of the hook for longevity, create sustainability in the tourism industry. A hundred and some people met yesterday in Georgetown. There are some really good initiatives.

In fact, on behalf of government, we had a consultant do a presentation to create that sustainability and we're going to continue to do that because that's what we are over here.

We're about looking forward and we're creating sustainability for the province of PEI.

Mr. LaVie: You're tired.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) work hard.

Mr. LaVie: You're a tired government.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It really is hard to get any answers and the minister there is all over the pond. I'm not sure what he's responding to now, but I'll bring it back to the questions that I'm asking.

Mr. LaVie: Looking for his lifejacket.

Ms. Compton: Sources tell me that the bulk of the submissions wanted to either lease or purchase – sorry; to lease, not purchase. This would have preserved the asset and this government wouldn't have had to resorted to a fire sale to take Mill River off the budget book.

Mill River deal

Minister: Why did you not bother to cycle back to some of those interested groups before dumping Mill River in this sweetheart deal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If the hon. member thinks that by leasing a property that there is going to be no capital investments and no money borrowed from government –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) gets better.

Mr. MacDonald: – from government for capital investments on a lease, then obviously they likely should have bought the golf course, not leased it.

Going forward, everybody is aware now and no one can come back and say that the golf courses – we'll look at every opportunity we have to get the taxpayers off the hook. We're tired of paying the \$850,000 in one form or another.

Mr. LaVie: I told you you were tired.

Mr. MacDonald: It's continuance to lead by good leadership, it's to take the taxpayers out of these – let the private sector step in like the good deed of Mr. MacDougall; let him run it as a professional. Let him bring his skills to West Prince and let West Prince grow. That's what it's all about; creating opportunity in rural PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Other options for purchase of Mill River

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There were many options left to this minister, even though he claims he didn't have any; he did have other options. He

knows all of this and is refusing to tell us the whole story.

Minister: Why did you fail to leverage all of this interest in those properties and give all interested parties a shot in order to avoid this fiasco of the sweetheart Mill River deal?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Sometimes it's a confused Conservative opposition over there. There were ROIs done. There were RFPs done and I'll go back to the Lord Selkirk Park when we wanted to give the community the actual – the hon. member was against it, leasing it. Now it's leased for or leased against.

Mr. Myers: Or give it away, which is what you did.

Mr. MacDonald: It's again, the bouncy castle, again, is irrelevant in some of these discussions and debate.

We go on fact, and that's exactly what we're doing. We have tabled almost everything that we've had.

Mr. Myers: I'm told you didn't know (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: We're transparent and accountable and we'll continue to be that way as a government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: I'm told they don't trust (Indistinct)

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

Ms. Biggar: Fantasy land.

Mr. Myers: I'm told they don't trust you with the deal.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: Fantasy land is another deal.

Ms. Biggar: Fantasy land.

Mr. Myers: Another bad deal of yours.

Speaker: Members, order.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) facts.

Mr. LaVie: Where are the facts?

Speaker: The hon. member has the floor and she wants to ask a question.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know Belfast is a great –

Mr. LaVie: Table the facts.

Ms. Compton: – community and you keep – everyone across the floor there keeps referring to it. We did take over the golf course. A not-for-profit took over that golf course and we work hard to continue to keep that facility going in our community; a not-for-profit.

I know that more than one party in this group of seven included Mill River in their proposal. The minister of health knows it too, because he ran the EOI. We have the proof and I'll be tabling it later.

Minister: Why do you continue to deny the facts around your sweetheart Mill River deal?

Mr. LaVie: Table the facts.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, obviously the hon. member has a short memory that she didn't want to deal with the Lord Selkirk park at the beginning of our negotiations with this government, so it's funny how things change and how you see that – if you give it a chance, as the editorial said today: Give the opportunity a chance, see what Mr. McDougall can bring. Not only to his business skills, but his mentorship of other businesses in the area –

see how many contractors are working up there.

We'll continue to forge ahead with our industries and we'll continue to grow the prosperity of Prince Edward Island, especially in rural PEI. As I stated several times, 60% of my loan portfolio is in rural PEI, \$63 million is invested in tourism product right across the Island from one end of the Island to the other. We give out \$23 million in grants per year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, this is your final question.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will go on record as saying I was not for taking over Lord Selkirk Park at the time. We were losing \$75,000 a year and government was pushing it off to a not-for-profit community group. How were we going to make – not-for-profit – not Don McDougall.

Mr. MacEwen: Did they give you \$10 million?

Mr. Myers: And not a Toronto millionaire.

Ms. Compton: And not a Toronto millionaire.

And thanks to the Island Community Fund that this government destroyed –

Mr. Myers: Listen to the other millionaire over here.

Ms. Compton: – we were able to do it –

Mr. Myers: Millionaire Premier.

Ms. Compton: – and we worked very hard. A not-for-profit who took over a community venture – that's what we did.

Tabling of Mill River contract

Minister: You keep talking over and over again about what a great deal this is. It's a great deal. We hear it over and over again. If it's such a great deal, why won't you table the contract?

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

Mr. MacDonald: That's the first time I heard anyone say the Island Community Fund was a great fund because we've heard from day one that it was no good. So, that's good, thank you.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: We'll continue to forge ahead. Our tourism industry is gearing up for likely the third-best year ever. There are lots of activities going on. There's hardworking industry out there and we're going to continue to look at ways to grow prosperity in rural PEI. I hope the opposition can see through this –

Mr. LaVie: Maybe the media can get the contract.

Mr. MacDonald: – the political charge that they continue to pound on this, but more so, I hope Mr. McDougall doesn't refute any investments in the future by going through all this.

Mr. Myers: Hope he doesn't refuse to take another free golf course.

Mr. MacDonald: I hope he continues to come here and invest on Prince Edward Island as many other repatriates have done and we move forward in a positive manner.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]