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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

THURSDAY, 4 MAY 2017

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Speaker: The Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During Question Period yesterday I was asked several questions by the Leader of the Opposition in regard to the TransCanada Highway project and there were a number of them. What I have done is encompassed the answer into one.

If I may, with your indulgence.

Speaker: Go ahead.

Ms. Biggar: I was asked questions on Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Trans-Canada Highway project, which is an important project which will facilitate great economic growth for PEI. It is a major corridor for exports for the travelling public and for tourism.

This capital season, we are investing over \$40 million in projects across PEI. In response to these questions from yesterday, we received federal approval for Phase 1 of the Trans-Canada Highway project on July 26th, 2016. We put the tender out on July 28th, 2016. The tender closed Thursday, August 18th, 2016. We received three bids for Phase 1 and the successful bidder was Island Coastal Services at \$3,954,530 plus HST.

Mr. LaVie: Was that the lowest bid?

Ms. Biggar: With regards to – yes, that was the lowest bid, hon. member. I will certainly be tabling documents to prove that.

With regards to Phase 2A. We received federal approval on January 27th, 2017. The tender was put out on March 9th, 2017. The tender closed April 6th, 2017. There was only one bid on this tender and the successful bid was Island Coastal Services at \$4,826,023 plus HST.

Mr. Myers: Premier's cousin.

Ms. Biggar: We have also received from the federal minister, the letter of approval for Phase 2B. That was received on April 13th, 2017.

I will be, as our commitment to transparency, be tabling documents in this regard.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker –

Mr. Aylward: I'd like to see the contract for Mill River.

Premier MacLauchlan: – yesterday the Member from Rustico-Emerald asked questions regarding the Order of Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Charles Curley called the secretary of the Order of PEI to resign from the advisory committee on April 3rd. The secretary informed Executive Council of the resignation on that same date.

Mr. Curley did not begin his new position until April 18th, 15 days later. The vacancy resulting from Mr. Curley's resignation was reflected on the Order of Prince Edward Island webpage as of April 21st. The webpage the member opposite referenced yesterday was actually –

Mr. Myers: As of yesterday afternoon we watched it disappear.

Premier MacLauchlan: – the Engage PEI page for the advisory committee and that has subsequently been updated.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the Member from Stratford-Kinlock asked about a 2014 report entitled: Meeting the Inpatient Mental Health & Addictions Care Needs of Islanders.

That report was put out to RFP. We had two interested parties. The lowest bid was from Corpus Sanchez International Consultancy

Inc. They were awarded the contract under RFP No. 3586. The cost before taxes was \$22,500.

This report was commissioned by Health PEI, not the Department of Health and Wellness, and, as such, was not included in the response to Written Questions No. 732.

The final report included seven recommendations to government. We have completed, or have work underway on five of the seven recommendations and for the remaining two recommendations; work is underway to address the gaps for services identified in the report. However, we are taking a different approach than was recommended by those consultants.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Questions by Members

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today does mark two years since the last general election, and because it's throwback Thursday, I want to outline how the man in the Premier's chair has failed to live up to the position. This, today, is his report card.

Premier, you promised not to take the full Premier's salary. A broken promise that ruins your perfect record.

Premier: Why have gone back on your word?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Salary of Premier

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I indicated before the election that I would take the salary of an MLA and of a regular Cabinet minister and not the further supplement for serving as Premier. The difference between those two salaries, that's to say between a Cabinet minister and that of the Premier, is contributed to the United Way of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

This Premier is on a tax-dollar-fueled trip to satisfy the indulgence of the finest whims he feels are becoming of the Premier.

This Premier promised not to take the full Premier's salary. Taking it all and trading the tax dollars for income tax receipts are not keeping his promise. You said you wouldn't take the money. You're taking it and getting tax receipts.

Question to the Premier: Why have you gone back on your word?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure there are many people who benefit from that contribution to the United Way, and the reason for choosing to do it that way was that the alternative would have been to change legislation, to permanently change the salary of the Premier of Prince Edward Island, and that was not something that I felt was my place to do for future premiers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So he certainly felt like he had that ability when he was making those wild promises during the election, when he told Islanders. So now what happens, is taxpayers pay him the money, he gets to donate it and get the tax receipt for it. Taxpayers are paying for that goodwill to the United Way, not you. Why don't you just give them the \$20,000?

I'm going to give you an F on that one.

Mr. Premier, you promised in your own mandate letter a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and decision-making in governance; a broken Liberal promise that ruins the word of this Premier.

Premier, why have you gone back on your word?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms. Biggar: No question there.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, from the time we came to government it was very clear, and it was clear in the lead-up to that election, that we're committed to openness and transparency including, among other things, the appointment of a commissioner for ethics and integrity to work with us and with the public service and many other measures to indeed enhance openness, transparency, and ethical integrity throughout government, and we're proud to stand by that Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly having to hire someone to make sure that you guys follow rules isn't something that you should be proud of. That's for sure. You should have just come in and said: Everybody's following the rules now, because that's not the way I do business.

I'll give you an F on that one.

CBC-investigation into egaming

Next on the report card: The Premier went on CBC, and I remember the interview quite well. He promised a full investigation to egaming, and boy, was he ever brazen that night. No stone was going to be unturned; a broken Liberal promise again, a broken promise by this Premier.

Premier, why have you gone back on your word?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, this is a question that's been answered many times in this House, and the hon. member is correct, that on the ninth day that I was Premier we had a mandate to the Auditor General, one that she pursued fully, one that she pursued with the cooperation of all parts of government, and one that's been fully questioned in this House and elsewhere.

The Auditor General made 15 recommendations. We took all of that advice, have acted on it, and indeed there's legislation before the House in this sitting to further act on that report.

I'm proud to say this government – our government – has indeed taken that advice and we're moving forward for the benefit of Prince Edward Islanders and giving good government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Islanders certainly don't feel like that this is good government; the second-least popular premier in all of Canada, only trailing Kathleen Wynne, which is embarrassing, considering how unpopular she is. You're right behind her. You're the second-least popular premier in all of Canada, and you have the same shady backroom operatives, doing the same kind of shady backroom deals. You've done nothing to stop it at all. You stood in the way. You allowed emails to be deleted. You didn't make anybody accountable for anything.

I'm going to give you an F on that one.

Accountability and consequences of Liberal government

The Premier promised accountability and consequences for any wrongdoing; a broken Liberal promise by this tired Liberal Premier.

Premier, why have you gone back on your word?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we acted immediately on coming to government, for example, in extending conflict of interest requirements to senior public servants and senior political officials; and created the office of the Commissioner of Ethics and Integrity. We have legislation coming forward to further act on our policy for public interest disclosure. If you go right down the list, we have acted on our word and the people of this province are benefitting from it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What people wanted from this Premier were consequences for the people who broke all of the rules in government; for the people who did all these shady egaming deals; all the people that were feeding their friends and family out of this deal. They wanted consequences.

You didn't even bring a bill to this floor that brings consequences in the future. You didn't even bother to show Islanders the decency to bring forward a bill that would deal with it properly in the future.

I'm giving you another F.

Restoring of elected school boards

This Premier promised to restore elected school boards; another broken promise by a tired, tired Liberal government.

Premier, why have you gone back on your word?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, in early November of 2015, we called a media conference, at which we indicated that there was a new approach to educational governance in this province. As I recall, it was attended by the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters who indeed acknowledged that this was a step forward and applauded the initiative.

Further, in the spring of 2016, we brought forward legislation, a new *Education Act*, the first time in more than 40 years, adopted unanimously by this House that indeed put in place the councils, the Learning Partners Advisory Council, the Principals Council, the district advisory council, that brings together on the order of 200 people who are working together with the people and the teachers and the students for educational excellence in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Number of Cabinet minister's

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's an F. You did your own F. But thank you for grading yourself. That's another F, another broken promise.

This Premier also promised to have a smaller Cabinet. Remember that promise? And then he just kept it getting bigger and bigger, like triple-down on breaking that promise.

Premier, why have you gone back on your word?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we have indeed started out with a smaller Cabinet and increased it, and that's because we're doing so much great work and we're sharing the work and we said we'd work together –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Premier MacLauchlan: We said we'd work together, and we did indeed live up to the promise of having a smaller Cabinet. We've found that with many great things to do that we're sharing the work and the work is getting done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So what happened is the Premier's not a very good leader, and everyone over there knows it. He's got no followers, and what he had to do was he had to expand it and put more Cabinet members in to get people under control. Everyone knows that's what you did. It's because you're not good at what you do; another F.

Premier and international travel

This Premier promised to do more with less, and yet he's racked up an obscene amount of international travel with our tax dollars; a broken promise that ruins the once good word of this Premier.

Premier, why have you gone back on your word?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, on the precise points of travel, I think you'll find travel's about two-thirds of what it has been under previous administrations, and we are getting more done with less.

And let me say, just to what extent and it was mentioned earlier, in economic growth we got 2.4% growth in the GDP in 2016, the highest in 10 years. We got a balanced budget, the first time in 10 years, and the opposition's found about 20 ways to spend a small surplus.

Mr. Myers: Swinging his arms. You know you got him good when he's swinging his arms.

Premier MacLauchlan: And Mr. Speaker, we said we were going to bring the people of Prince Edward Island prosperity, engagement, and we've done it, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

He talks about previous administrations, he travels twice as much as Robert Ghiz, so he's travelling twice as much as Robert Ghiz.

This Premier expects Islanders – you expect us to foot a bill so you can deliver mayflowers and go watch a play; another F.

Concrete action to vulnerable Islanders

The Premier promised concrete action to protect the most vulnerable; yet, real facts on the ground here tell a much different tale. This Premier broke his promise. He broke a promise to vulnerable Islanders.

Premier, why have you gone back on your word?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to tell this House – I don't know how the member opposite doesn't realize it – but I'm happy to tell this House and the people what we've done for vulnerable Islanders: More than \$2 million since being elected in increases in the food allowance; we've increased the comfort allowance for the second time; we've changed the income tax so that there are benefits for low-income Islanders, 12,000 of whom have seen their taxes reduced, 3,000 of whom are paying no taxes. You can see it in the housing programs, you can see it in the housing programs, you can see it in disability

support. We are responding because first, we have practiced good stewardship in the fiscal management of this province –

Mr. Myers: You should turn your Order of PEI back in. (Indistinct) not deserve it.

Premier MacLauchlan: And Mr. Speaker, we are responding to where the need is greatest, because that's where we can make the greatest difference.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This Premier promised to be different. The Premier auctioned himself and his office off to raise money for a property which he holds a debt and a security on –

An Hon. Member: Oh, does he really?

Mr. LaVie: – against the conflict of interest laws.

A question to the Premier: Why do the rules not apply to you?

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question. Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I believe that matter was well discussed in this House in the sitting of last spring and I don't think the opposition got very far with it then and I don't think they will now. This was an initiative to support a community endeavor and, indeed, there are others that are on the record.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Premier MacLauchlan: There are others that are on the record and, of course, if the opposition even wants to mock a donation to the United Way, I think all Islanders –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Premier MacLauchlan: and certainly I believe it's my part to support –

Speaker: Okay hon. –

Excuse me, Premier.

Hon. members, once again when somebody – you know it's against the rules. It's right in the rule book: Do not interrupt a member while they're answering a question. It's as simple as that. Okay?

Go ahead hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I believe, and I hope all members would agree with it, that we have an obligation. We are leaders in our community. We have the means and we should be supporting community organizations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, you promised to be different – the last election. Vote for me, I'll be different. What's different? The Premier took a first-class train trip in the UK against the rules of the Treasury Board – against the rules.

Premier: Why do the rules not apply to you?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Mr. Myers: Don't Paula Biggars me.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I recently took what turned out to be a 27 hour flight in regular class –

Mr. Myers: It's because you never stop flying that because you're never home.

Premier MacLauchlan: – to get to China. My practice is to –

Mr. Myers: \$20,000 for the plane tickets.

Premier MacLauchlan: – to be frugal. My practice is to be frugal in everything that

we're doing through our office and in government and I'm prepared to stand by that and to show that we got results to show to the people of Prince Edward Island for the investments and the expenses that we are undertaking.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: \$20,000 for the plane ticket is frugal when you're rich.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is a Premier that promised to be different. Premier, come to the east end of the Island, I'll show you the people that can't afford a 27 hour plane trip – can't afford to put food on the table.

The Premier is staying at a four and five-star hotel while travelling the world, which is against the rules of the Treasury Board.

Premier, why do the rules not apply to you?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I tabled in this House – I guess I'll have to table it again because it obviously didn't sink in – the comparison of the travel expenses of my time as Premier with previous administrations and there's a substantial difference of big saving and a more frugal approach and one that is bearing results for the people of this province. And since it hasn't obviously sunk in on the other side, I'll table that again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Here's a Premier that's not getting it. Here's a Premier that promised to be different. What's different?

Mr. Myers: Nothing.

Mr. LaVie: Mr. Speaker, the Premier refused to hold fixed election dates of our province against the spirit of the *Elections Act*.

Fixed election dates and Election Act

Question to the Premier: Why do the rules not apply to you?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I think the people of Prince Edward Island recognize two years ago today, May 4th, there was time for an election. We had four party leaders, none of whom had a seat in the house – that was well explained and, indeed, it is done precisely under the provisions of the *Elections Act*.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Premier and honouring vote of plebiscite

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The people of Prince Edward Island know that the Premier promised to be different. He's not different – just look at the poles. The poles will show – you're not different. To the Premier – refused to honour the vote of a plebiscite which himself set up – set the plebiscite up, doing the opposite of what Islanders voted for.

Question to the Premier: Why do the rules not apply to you?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the plebiscite was non-binding. I know the Member for Souris-Elmira voted the same way I did when the motion came to the

floor. I think it was well explained here in this House and elsewhere that there is a desire for the people of Prince Edward Island to give this Legislature a strong mandate when it comes time to making such a fundamental change in our electoral system. I don't believe it was my view – or I don't believe it could have been the view of the Member from Souris Elmira, that one in five voters was a sufficient number to warrant a change to that extent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Refusal of disclosure to Conflict of Interest Commissioner and timeline

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well this is the Premier that promised to be different. There's nothing different, Mr. Speaker. The Premier refused for weeks to submit his disclosure of the holdings in the vast – personal inheritances with the Conflict of Interest Commissioner when he ascended to the Premier's chair.

Question to the Premier: Why do the rules not apply to you?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the conflict of interest legislation and the associated rules are clear and there's an amount of time during which people comply with those requirements and there are good reasons behind those timelines. I, indeed, did make that submission to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner in its fullness and on time and I'm happy to have done so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On the Member from Georgetown-St. Peter's report card, he's giving you an F. I'll give you the benefit of the doubt – 28% down in the polls – I'll give you a D on your report card.

Mr. Myers: You got a D. Your mom would be proud.

Mr. LaVie: This is the Premier that promised to be different.

An Hon. Member: D minus.

Snow clearing at Liberal dinner

Mr. LaVie: The Premier had government ploughs.

An Hon. Member: Reverse (Indistinct) that is (Indistinct).

Mr. LaVie: The Premier had government ploughs plough out the parking lot at the Liberal dinner this winter.

An Hon. Member: Go away.

Mr. Myers: In his own district?

Mr. LaVie: Personal plough –

Mr. Myers: Oh, in his own district.

Mr. LaVie: – in his own district to clean out the parking lot against the conflict of interest laws.

Mr. Myers: Even had (Indistinct) out there.

Mr. LaVie: Premier: Why do the rules not apply to you?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I guess it must be because we're so popular that we need more room for people to come to these dinners. In fact, as I recall, it was sold out – as was the dinner last night.

But let me say, I keep hearing about rules, rules, rules across the way. I think one of the rules of this House, is if you're asking a

question, you have to have an honest premise behind it. There have been a number of things said here today that, in effect; do not stand up to the facts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Question from the –

Order, order!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Soil vitality and support of Island crops

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

I welcomed the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries' statement yesterday in the House about the importance of soil health and, specifically, of organic matter as a measure of soil vitality as we work to diversify the agricultural sector here on Prince Edward Island.

A question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: What new crops is his department considering supporting as suitable additions to those that we currently grow?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

I was glad to see the Leader of the Opposition walking today with an agriculture-type tie. I'm sure that's all local produce. That's terrific. Good to see that. It's good to have some agricultural questions here as well.

Mr. LaVie: You couldn't answer the last one.

Mr. McIsaac: There are a lot of things happening in agriculture which we're really pleased with. We have a new green company here that's trying out new oil seed grains and they actually have contracts now for, I think, 5,000 acres; brand new company

to the province after growing a few acres last year, which is absolutely terrific.

We're looking at some more blueberries as well, and any crops that come along that we can support. We have programs there that we will work with them on those crops that they put forward.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Crops affected by decline in pollinators

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

According to the United Nations' food and agriculture organization, bees pollinate 71 of the 100 crops that supply 90% of our food. A new study released earlier this week sheds light once more on the potential harm to pollinators, such as bees, by a group of pesticides; many of them used widely here on Prince Edward Island called neonicotinoids.

Minister: Which of these new crops; apples, blueberries, pulses and the various other ones that we now grow here on Prince Edward Island; which of these new crops could be affected by declines in pollinators?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

That's a very good and timely question, one that's really important to us and we have been discussing this in the department. We have been working and monitoring the studies that are being done with PMRA through Health Canada; very concerning as to what may be affecting the queen bees.

But, as the studies go on, we will be continuing to monitor that; checking the science on it. We have a real concern that we do need pollinators, that's for sure. We have other pests that we need to clean up as well. We cannot do it all organically, but we are monitoring the whole situation. But, as

far as pollination goes, I would say pretty well every one of them.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Use of neonicotinoids in the province

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Indeed, almost every one of them does require pollinator for ongoing health.

Neonicotinoids use in Europe was suspended on most crops in 2013 and the European Union is reportedly set to impose a wider ban later this year. In Ontario, it is phasing out the blanket use of neonics on corn and soy bean crops.

A question to the minister: Is Prince Edward Island moving proactively to review and/or ban the use of neonicotinoids to reduce the risks for new emerging crops that his department may be supporting?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

We have, actually, staff in our department that are covering that very topic and it's very concerning on both sides of the ticket there with regards to that issue. Imidacloprid, which is a neonicotinoid, is to be phased out by 2020. We're watching that very carefully. But again, we're monitoring everything PMRA does. It is a federal body so we're doing our part from the provincial scene to follow what they're doing, watching the science on it; still at the same time, very concerned as to how that may affect our province here.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Timely responses to unnatural, unexpected or unexplained deaths

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is for the Minister of Justice and Public Safety. In May of 2016, an amendment to the *Coroners Act* was approved by this Legislature. This amendment enabled the chief coroner to appoint field investigators to ensure stable coverage and timely response to unnatural, unexpected or unexplained deaths on PEI.

Can you update the House on this progress?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Member from Tignish-Palmer Road is correct. The amendments that he mentions were adopted and received Royal Assent, but have yet to be proclaimed under the provisions of that law. The amendments would allow for field investigators to be appointed and they might include advanced care paramedics or registered nurses to work with the coroner on death investigations.

In order to proceed with that arrangement, there needs to be consultations with medical professionals involved, as well as their employers, before moving forward to appoint field investigators and there also is some training involved and that would be done in partnership with Nova Scotia's chief medical examiner and we're committed to moving forward with these improvements so that the coroner service can be offered on a timely basis.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, in my area we haven't seen any changes yet and it's been a year since this has happened. Response times for the investigation of a death can be sometimes longer than four hours. I think this is really a heart wrenching burden on the families who have to stand there and see their loved one

laying on the side of the road or in a car or at home for very many hours before their bodies are able to be transported. Something needs to change.

What can be done?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I agree with the hon. member, this traumatic experience for the families involved and that any delay can be stressful, and I share the concerns of the family and of the member in raising this question.

In these situations of an unexpected or an unnatural or a sudden death, first there has to be a report to a police officer or to the coroner and that can happen in a variety of ways through police, through the hospital, through paramedics.

Then once that takes place and the notification occurs to the coroner, there may be questions. They may have an investigation. There may, indeed, be issues around transportation that add up to a delay and indeed, stressful situations for the family.

We're committed and we're working to improve this whole process, including the possibility of the appointment of field investigators, working with other agencies, looking into improvements in transportation services, and also, in modernizing or having a more advanced approach to the reporting and data management.

That work is underway and I commit the Member from Tignish-Palmer Road and to the House, that we take this issue very seriously and we intend to see some progress.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Cancer strategy for PEI

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Minister, a year ago you released the cancer strategy for PEI. Can you please provide the House with an update on the work that has been carried out so far?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, we did release a cancer strategy in the last year, and in that particular case we're really focusing on the prevalent cancers of lung, breast, colorectal and prostate cancer. We have done great work in that area. In fact, we have enhanced the cancer coordination within this province.

We also have a cancer research and surveillance program that's going to focus on the breast cancer trends on Prince Edward Island. We've also got action groups that are also coming up with solutions around breast cancer and lung cancer, and we have many ongoing campaigns.

You might have seen some of them on TV around breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screenings. We're also working on reducing the wait times from suspicions of cancer to the actual diagnosis. Plus, we've added 54 drugs to the formulary for cancer treatment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As part of this year's budget, new funding has been committed for \$443,000. Could the minister – in support of this cancer strategy – could the minister explain how this money is going to be spent?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Yes. I am very proud to say that in a budget increase of about 5.8% to the Health PEI budget, we have allocated \$443,000, specifically, to focus on implementing some

of the cancer strategy. Some of the things that we're going to be doing will be increasing the cancer screening and promotion awareness campaign. The rationale behind that is that early detection has the best outcomes. We have to make sure we're getting those things.

We're also providing a lot more coordination within the department around patient navigation and making sure people get to those treatments and a lung cancer feasibility study will also be implemented and we will also be providing some supports to palliative care, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Minister: Will these programs be up and running this year for Islanders to access? If not, when?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, now that our budget has been tabled on the floor of the Legislature and we have gone through our estimates. We acknowledge that we will be spending that money this fiscal year. Those resources will be going directly into the items I had mentioned earlier in improving cancer outcomes in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Funding a dementia strategy

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

Recently, the Ontario government announced the implementation of dementia strategy.

Question to the minister of health: Why have you broken your promise to Islanders

by failing to fund a dementia strategy here in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, actually when it comes to issues of dementia, Alzheimer's, some of those particular situations, that's all included in what we're doing in our long-term care section.

Recently, we just hired a senior policy analyst, Michael Corman. He is working on developing some of the strategies that could be put in place.

We have to make sure that we are spending our money wisely and that we are getting the maximum value. We see that the Alzheimer's and dementia situations do seem to be on the rise and we are projecting that that will be a greater issue as we move forward. We just need to make sure we're getting our expenditures right, and I look forward to Michael's work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

Once again, another promise made and another promise broken.

On November 26th, 2015, in this Legislature, the former minister of health stated in an update: The framework for the dementia strategy is complete and the Department of Health and Wellness has received it.

Again to the minister of health: Where is this promised dementia strategy for our province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, we have done lots of work regarding long-term care and dementia and Alzheimer's and to try to

deal with the challenges that those individuals and families that happen to be dealing with.

We're certainly working with our community care facilities. We're certainly working with the staff within long-term care and we will be implementing some of these types of initiatives in the very near future, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

Work began on the strategy back in 2009; 2009 – seven long years ago. Again to the minister of health: Why are you stalling on releasing this strategy, minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, since I have become minister about year and a half ago, we have been working on really having a good look at how our long-term care strategies and how those types of initiatives are going to be unfolded. We want to make sure we're getting it right.

We're getting requests. I hear it all the time from the other side of the House: We want more long-term care beds here. We want more dementia beds there.

We have to make sure that we're getting this right and that we're putting together to meet the needs of long-term care residents, and those that are afflicted with dementia and Alzheimer's –

Mr. Trivers: It's been seven years.

Mr. Henderson: – and we'll be working on that right now, which our senior policy analyst is reviewing at the moment, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Alzheimer's Society of Prince Edward Island and several other organizations have worked tirelessly on this initiative over the last 10 years.

Again to the minister of health: Why are failing to address the needs of Islanders with these diseases, minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, certainly seniors are very important contributors to this Island and I think they are due the respect that we're making sure that we're putting the right plans in place and making the right expenditures that we can get the maximum input back.

Some of the issues that we're looking at in our department are the issues around the seniors' assessment screening tool. We're the only province in Canada that actually uses that. I want to take a look at what are the other possible provinces doing when it comes to screening tools to identify individuals with dementia, Alzheimer's. We have to make sure that we understand what the possible impacts are of changing our screening tools. We have to make sure we are making the right investments at the right time for the right individual, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

PEI only province without funded dementia strategy

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

While this minister is out looking at other provinces, I suggest he stand in a mirror and look at himself because this minister, this province, is currently the only province in this great nation of Canada that does not a dementia strategy. We are the only province without.

Mr. Trivers: Shame.

Mr. Aylward: Again, minister, the fully funded Ontario model will help ensure people living with dementia, their care partners and their families have access to the resources and services they need to live, as well, and for as long as possible.

Why are Islanders with dementia being denied these services, minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I will say that when I do look in the mirror, I see that since becoming Minister of Health and Wellness, my hair has become a little whiter and greyer, but these are very serious issues. I think it's easy to make accusations that we're not implementing a certain strategy.

We do have a strategy. We do work with individuals with dementia. Our staff are well trained in understanding the challenges that families are faced with when it comes to dementia and Alzheimer's. We also have situations where we have dementia units. I know the Summerset Manor has a dementia unit where individuals that are having real struggles in the dementia components of things.

I'm well aware of the challenges. My own mother is suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's and she's in long-term care. I'm so proud of the work that the staff does in our long-term care facilities to meet the needs of any patient suffering from Alzheimer's or dementia, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

This minister stands here in response to my last question and says: You know, this is a very serious issue; one that we need to take seriously, but in the same breath he's making jokes about how hard he's working and his hair changing colour –

Some Hon. Members: Oh! No!

Mr. Aylward: – if you're going to take this seriously, then take it seriously, okay?

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Aylward: This is an extremely serious issue –

Ms. Biggar: He just told you (Indistinct)

Mr. Aylward: Again minister, last Thursday you flippantly suggested in this House that Islanders are getting health services that are as good as anywhere else in this country. We know that is not true.

Again, to the minister: When will we see a dementia strategy in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock obviously doesn't have much confidence in the staff that we have at Health PEI and the people that are delivering health care in this province.

We have increased long-term beds by 145 more long-term care beds in this province. Many of those beds would have been utilized by individuals that are suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's.

When people are provided the opportunity for the care that they require at our facilities, we focus on those that are most urgent. Dementia and Alzheimer's patients can become very urgent and a challenge for the health care system. That's why we have to be able to provide the beds and make sure that the staff is trained to deal with these types of situations.

I have every confidence that the staff at Health PEI and the Department of Health and Wellness are doing their very best, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

I certainly do appreciate the hard work of health care professionals here on Prince Edward Island. I feel terrible for them that they're not being supported by this government. This government that I am giving a grade of F.

Minister, your government's record is one of promising Islanders one thing and delivering on nothing.

Again to the minister of health: Will you be truthful here today. Have you scrapped your government's plan for a dementia strategy in this province? Yes or no?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, that's what I'm trying to say to the hon. member on the other side. We are working on a strategy. We have an individual, Michael Corman –

Mr. Aylward: Since 2009.

Mr. Henderson: – that is a senior policy analyst. He has recently commenced his position. He's doing great work. The first issue is he has to get out and make sure he understands the facilities that are possible out there. How seniors' care is delivered in this province. The issues around investments in homecare.

We'll be doing that. We have that in our Budget, which is one of the largest increases in the health care budget that this province has ever seen, an increase of 5.8%. We will meet the challenges for many – myriad of issues of health care and that includes dementia and for seniors, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Tabling of Mill River Contract (further)

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism –

Ms. Casey: Recycled.

Mr. MacEwen: Do you know what? It's not that recycled. It's an answer that we really are looking forward to.

Mr. Aylward: All Islanders are, actually.

Mr. MacEwen: After years of asking and requesting and FOIPPING the Bell Aliant deal and being denied over and over again the minister finally tabled that deal.

I remember back when opposition, the public, everybody was asking for the list of PNP names –

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) be tabled anyway you just go right to it anyway, so what difference?

Mr. Myers: Can't follow the rules.

Mr. MacEwen: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, do I have the floor?

Speaker: Okay, hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, carry on.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, for allowing me to have the floor.

Minister, after years and years of asking for the PNP list: No, we can't give it. Guess what this government did. They finally tabled the list.

We've asked nearly every day for the Mill River contract. A wise person – in fact, a former minister of economic development – once told me: It is only those who have done nothing wrong that can live without fear of the whole truth being shared.

My question for the minister is: Minister, will you table the full Mill River deal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's been great today to read in the paper about Burger Love and the Mill River –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald: It's great to see the support of West Prince. The public really acknowledges what we've done with a very strategic asset in West Prince –

An Hon. Member: That's your sweetheart burger.

Mr. MacDonald: We're encouraging business investment development and sales in key areas. We're looking at all our assets right across Prince Edward Island, and we'll continue to do that.

I think everybody's seen the economic report through Stats Can. It was in the paper. The media's reported on it, and today the chamber endorses us, so –

An Hon. Member: All great deals.

Mr. MacDonald: We're going in the right direction, and in due time, through legal, we'll do what we have to do –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Okay.

An Hon. Member: He can't follow the rules.

Speaker: All right, thank you, hon. minister. Fine. That's good.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]