



Session:	2/65
Date:	5 May 2017
No:	60

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

FRIDAY, 5 MAY 2017

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I feel like I'm getting some exercise today with my up and downs.

According to the mental health strategy, 22% of social assistance clients self-identify as having mental health issues.

Resources in social assistance system

Question to the Minister of Family and Human Services: What specific resources are available in the social assistance system to help Islanders with mental health issues get beyond this vicious cycle?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, the Social Assistance Program and all of our programs in my department are there to help vulnerable Islanders help meet their basic needs.

Mental health strategies, mental health issues, they're all handled through our department of health, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Supports to homeless people on PEI

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The 2015 report on homelessness found that 38% of homeless people on the Island are between the ages of 16-24, nearly double the national average.

Question to the Minister of Family and Human Services: Does your department

provide any mental health supports to this vulnerable population?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have many partnerships out there with our NGO communities. Anyone who would be seeking mental health support would either be directed to an emergency room or through programs at Canadian Mental Health Association, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Housing supports to Islanders with mental health issues

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

Again, another question to the Minister of Family and Human Services: What housing supports are currently available for vulnerable young Islanders with mental health issues?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I only heard the last part of the question. Could the hon. member please repeat that question?

Speaker: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Aylward: Certainly, Mr. Speaker.

Again, to the minister: What housing supports are currently available for vulnerable young Islanders with mental health issues?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, through our partnership with the NGO, Canadian mental health, they have many programs that have housing options for persons who are suffering mental illness. We would help assist them through, either a rent supplement, or some kind of a program that would help them through social assistance, or through a rent shelter program, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

The 2015 report on homelessness found that 47% of homeless people on the Island self-identified as having a mental health issue.

Upcoming mental health strategy

Question again to the Minister of Family and Human Services: How will your upcoming housing strategy align with the mental health strategy to better deal with this vulnerable group?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: Good question. Break down the silos.

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Actually, that is a great question. We are working collaboratively across government and we are breaking down silos. With the provincial housing strategy we will be, also, talking with our colleagues in workforce and advanced learning, in health and wellness, in education, so the provincial housing strategy – and we will be lining it up with the National Housing Strategy.

The provincial housing strategy is going to be looking at the needs of all Islanders: those Islanders that are suffering with mental illnesses, those that have income

shortages, as well as those Islanders who just need a little hand.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

The Premier and his government keep talking about the Hub model instead of what we should be talking about, a child advocate.

Hub model/mental health

Again, question to the Minister of Family and Human Services: Where is the hub model that will address this pressing issue of mental health in the health, justice and social services?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: Good question. Where is the hub?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, yes, we do have numerous services that we provide for people of all calibers, ages, genres, et cetera when it comes to mental health issues. We do have an arrangement with the Canadian Mental Health Association where we provide them funding to deliver some of the services. I believe they have over 76 workers that are providing mental health supports to Islanders of all ages and genres.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

There are many community stakeholders working to try and address these issues daily.

Provincial housing strategy

Question again to the Minister of Family and Human Services: Will these groups have a seat at the table before your long overdue housing strategy is developed so that the voices of these vulnerable Islanders are heard?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We speak, almost daily, with all of our stakeholders, but as for the provincial housing strategy, yes, we will be engaging our stakeholders and getting their input because that is very important. We will also be engaging the federal government. We'll also be talking with our colleagues in other jurisdictions.

This provincial housing strategy, you're right, it has been overdue because since the Campbell years there hasn't been a government out there that has put housing as a priority. Two years ago when this government formed power, we were the first government in how many – in over 60 years that said housing needs to be an important issue. It needs to be a priority. It needs to be front and foremost and it needs to address the concerns of Islanders now and well into the future. That is what this provincial housing strategy will do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

This week we have been discussing a \$22,000 Corpus Sanchez study on the Hillsborough Hospital. That study talked about the challenge of the safety net role played by Hillsborough Hospital for Islander who struggle to transition back into the community successfully.

Safety net role of Hillsborough Hospital (further)

This safety net role is not formally recognized in the Hillsborough Hospital's mandate, despite this situation existing for many years now.

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Why hasn't this been officially recognized as part of the Hillsborough Hospital's mandate?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, when any patient is discharged or transitioned back into the community, the workforce, their home, whatever it might be, there is usually always a patient-care plan that is put in place and they, the staff, would know the most appropriate location where to transfer somebody. We do have many transition services across the province for individuals.

Also, families play a role in that too. Sometimes they may be transitioned back into the care of the family.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This safety net role persists because it hasn't been formally recognized. Resources and financial supports to perform that safety net role is lacking.

A question again to the minister of health: Is cost containment the reason why the safety net role hasn't been formally recognized in the Hillsborough Hospital's mandate?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker thanks for that question.

I guess the reality is that I'm part of a government that not only is delivering a balanced budget, but it's also increased the health care spending to this portfolio to the tune of 5.8%, and those resources are being disbursed all across the level of services that we provide; all health care needs in this province, whether that's mental health issues or what have you. I'm fully confident that it is not a money issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Action items in mental health strategy

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the reasons for the safety net role cited in the Corpus Sanchez study was the lack of effective community supports.

This further marginalizes Islanders struggling with mental health issues, ultimately driving people to institutional settings in both the health and justice systems.

A question again to the minister of health: What concrete action items are in your mental health strategy to improve community supports for Islanders with mental health issues?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, when we deliver the issues around mental health and the continuum of care that we administer when we deliver mental health, it isn't always about institutional components; it is about transition; it is about delivering services in many different forms and capacities, so we are very patient-centered when we deliver services to Islanders suffering from mental health issues and that are on the road to recovery from mental health issues, so we really look at the individual patient situation, and we try to deliver the supports and the care for that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Vacant psychologist position in clinical services

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have questions about psychology in the justice system today, and I'll ask them to the minister of health.

Minister: How long has the psychologist position under clinical services in the department of justice has been vacant?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, on that particular question on psychological assessments and the delivery of those, I'd have to get back to the hon. member with more specifics on that.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my understanding this position has been empty for months, if not years. This is a pretty major position. I'd like to read part of the description that comes right off the government website this morning.

"The Psychologist, in addition to providing clinical supervision and leadership for the Division's Clinical Services team, will provide a range of assessment, diagnosis, treatment and consultation for adult and youth offenders involved in the criminal justice system."

Does the minister consider this a priority?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, we certainly understand that psychiatry services are an important part of the delivery of (Indistinct) health care, and I'm sure they're very much a similar component of justice.

We do – I know in our department, we have a complement of 15 psychiatrists, of which there's a couple of vacancies; but the reality is some of these particular professions can be a challenge to recruit for, but we do have an individual that is going to be coming to the Island that will be delivering child psychiatry services in the summer, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Resources available in justice system for mental health

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm talking about psychologists in the correctional centres. Vulnerable Islanders are trapped in a vicious cycle, just struggling to access badly-needed mental health services in and outside our justice system.

Question to the health minister: What specifically resources are available in the justice system to help Islanders with mental health issues get beyond this cycle.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, because of the importance of that question, and I have to say it's not part of my portfolio, I'd have to take that question under advisement and get back to the hon. member.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mental health and justice system cycle

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another question to the health minister: How will the mental health strategy stop this vicious cycle affecting so many vulnerable Islanders who bounce between the health and justice system?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: That's a good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

That's true; there certainly are a lot of cross-components of mental illness and the components of challenges that that can have, and justice does play a bit of a role, and we do have different models, bridge models and hub models, to consult on a particular client situation.

But, I can say that we certainly are doing a lot of things in our department to try to make sure that we alleviate some of those problems, and some of those issues are some of the investments that we have made in the Insight Program, some of the addiction services for youth that we're dealing with, the Strength Program, we've increased hours of services at McGill Centre, and once again, even with Mount Herbert we're delivering services, and it can go right on into opiate replacement therapies, and the list can go on, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Vacant psychologist position in clinical services (further)

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Those are great initiatives that the minister's talking about, but they're far down the road. We have people that are showing up in our correctional facilities right now that need the help (Indistinct) of a psychologist.

Can we have it come out today that this position is a priority for this government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, obviously any time there's a vacancy – and I have innumerable vacancies in our department,

whether it's physicians, whether it's nurses, and especially physicians, as such; and psychologists would be no different.

I'm sure the Department of Justice and Public Safety is doing everything it can to recruit these positions, and hopefully we'll have some new recruits just as the school year is ending. There may be new people be able to access those services in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Wage increase for early childhood educators

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have a question for the minister of education and early childhood education: Minister, when is the next wage increase for the early childhood educators?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

The minister of education is speaking with the teachers at the present time. I know in the last round of negotiations, there was discussion on the increase, and I think they're due in October and April of each year as they are increased.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

New early years centres in province

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not so sure that we have a firm timeline on when the next increases are coming for early childhood educators. One year ago, the minister was saying in the paper that further wage increases for early childhood care workers were coming, and he also said that

more early year centres would be coming across the province.

Can the minister responsible for early childhood education update us on any new early years centres that are coming in the province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

On the early year centres, as the needs arise and as there's no competition with the private centres, there is the possibility that a new early year centre can open up, but we do not go into competition with the private centre.

When the funding is available, the numbers warranted, then the department looks at opening up a new early years – early childhood centre.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Tracking of waitlists for early childhood education centres

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, are we tracking waitlists for early childhood education centres across PEI?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

We have a whole department that looks after the early childhood piece. They look at the numbers. They can look further down the road with regards to the birth and the information with regards to that with new people coming into the province and such, and so they have a very good handle on the

numbers for the coming year and a couple of years down the road. They budget for that. They look at the placements for that, because we are very strong in the early year learning piece. We want them in that.

But again, we don't compete with the private centres, and the option is there for the parents if they want to go into an early year centre or a private centre, and it is a very beneficial and important part of the early year's program.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Lack of child care spaces for infants

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my understanding that child care spaces, especially for infants, are really hard to come by, especially in urban centres in PEI.

Minister, what is your government doing to correct the situation with the lack of infant spaces in early child education?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

That is a very important item and a very good question on that. We track that very well as well, because the infant spaces, we need more supports at that age level, and then as they age up we can back off a little bit on the support; but at that level, it is very tough.

But our department does follow those numbers. They look far ahead as well and keep track on it as well as possible, and we are going to continue to budget for that.

I know the department of education did get an increase in their funding this year, as did family and human services, as did health, so we work at –

Those are very important issues and items and the health of our children and our very most youngest and most vulnerable, we want to start them off very strongly. That's why we put kindergarten in the system. That's why we put the early years program in place – for the betterment of all our children.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I asked these questions a year ago as well and at that time, the government said that they're working on new infant-care spaces and that they were going to come and things were going to happen and we haven't seen it yet.

Can the minister commit to making new child/infant spaces in early childhood education a priority for this government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

That is a priority because we introduced the whole program – very much needed, as was kindergarten. Those are programs that our government put in place. We will continue to track that and we have a part of our department – one section of our department looks specifically at the early year piece and we will continue to do that because our government firmly believes in that area.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Last year this government set a goal of having a population of 150,000 Islanders by

the 150th anniversary of confederation. It appears that we're not going to reach that target, but it's clear that if we do choose to increase our population, immigration will play a pivotal role in that pursuit.

Temporary Foreign Workers and permanent residency

A question to the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning: What is government doing to enable the almost 1,000 workers who are here on Prince Edward Island through the Temporary Foreign Workers program to seek permanent residency on PEI?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In answer to the hon. member's question, there always is temporary foreign workers coming to PEI and, as you may be aware, they can stay for 120-180 days. Some of them choose to stay here after a certain amount of time, so there is an appropriate application process that they may apply for. It falls under the federal jurisdiction when they come here so they fall under their rules, but we're doing what we can when they apply and there's the PEI Association for Newcomers Canada and different organizations that help them

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

The minister stated to the media a little while ago that government is actually exploring whether there is a need for legislation to protect and retain migrant workers and the way it's done in Manitoba, for example.

A forum on migrant worker issues, which was hosted by the Cooper Institute in March, clearly showed, at least to me, that these issues are real and that they're harming people right now.

Question to the minister: What is the timeline for the study he talked about and what kind of public engagement will it include.

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In answer to the hon. member's question, the newcomers fall under the *Employment Standards Act* and they're protected under that. Anytime they come here, as I said earlier, there's mechanisms in place and we are looking at that at present and there will be something coming forward in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Migrant workers and access to public health care services

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

Some actions actually may not need to wait for further study at all. Temporary foreign workers pay taxes like all of us in this room. They pay source deductions like everybody in this room, and yet many of them do not have access to basic health care services. Other provinces have structured agreements in order to provide health coverage for all temporary foreign workers from the day that they arrive in Canada.

A question to the minister: Will government take immediate action to ensure that all migrant workers on Prince Edward Island have access to public health care services now?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, under an arrangement with the federal government, we do work with temporary foreign workers and any temporary foreign worker that has an agreement to work here for over 183 days receives access to health care services in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

New funding formula for municipalities

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

My question's for the Minister of Finance: Minister, discussions have been ongoing for some time now on a new funding formula for the municipalities across the province.

Would the minister please inform the House as to the status of those discussions?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to inform the House that we have been in negotiations for some time now and I'm extremely pleased to say that we have reached a funding agreement for 2017-2018, which enables the municipalities to strengthen the delivery of their services to their residents.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank, Summerside, Kensington, Charlottetown, Cornwall, Montague and the Federation of Municipalities that represents all the other communities for the great work that they've done to reach this agreement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Thank you, Minister. That's great news. Now that a new agreement has been reached, will it mean that there's an increase in funding for the municipalities?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Within the agreement that we have right now for 2017-2018, that means an extra \$2 million for all of those cities and

municipalities to work with. What we've done is we've taken, within the funding formula – the new one, we've converted to tax credits for things such as roads and police departments. We look at this as an overall balanced approach to working with all of the municipalities so that they know what's happening going forward and they can set their priorities as we go forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Agreement on funding for municipalities

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

Just on that point, I note that the municipalities have been looking for that kind of sustainability in an agreement. I'm wondering if there are plans to negotiate or set in place an agreement for future years.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, those discussions have gone extremely well. The formula is one that the province can work with as well as the municipalities. They're going to continue to work on this and we expect to have – and we look forward to having an agreement by summer that will extend out for five years, so that all the communities and the towns and municipalities will have predictability in their funding.

I know that that was mentioned in the throne speech – in the last throne speech that we had that we were going to do that – and I'm extremely pleased at the way that we've been able to work with all the communities on this. It's been a very positive experience.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Dairy policies under fire by President Trump

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: Minister, the Canadian dairy industry and its supply and management system has recently come under attack by the President of the United States. The President claims Canada's dairy policies are the cause of financial loss for dairy farmers in the US. This is an important issue for Summerside, as it is home to Amalgamated Dairies Limited, which is owned by 175 dairy producers who supply the co-op with its milk.

Minister: Can you explain why our dairy policies have come under fire by President Trump.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: You have to get a psychiatrist for that.

Mr. McIsaac: Can I explain why our dairy policies have come under fire by President Trump? Well, no. I don't think I can tell you the honest truth. And apparently the Member from Summerside-Wilmot has lost the idea of what a log question is here, too, because certainly not a log.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McIsaac: But anyway, it is a really important question because I don't think President Trump really understands supply management – our system here versus the system they have in the States. In Canada, we try to match supply with demand, so we only produce enough milk to fill the needs of our cheese, our butter, our yogurt, or whatever. Our farmers are not subsidized in any way. They get paid for their milk directly by the consumer based on a cost to production and formula.

We have people go into the farms and they say: What does it cost to produce a litre of

milk? And they come up with those figures and they bring it back and that's what the producer is paid. On top of that, there's a cost of production for what it costs to process the milk and that's what the consumer pays in total.

In the States, they can be subsidized up to 30% of the product and then with that, they want to dump it on the world market, so they're subsidized, but then they produce so much product they have no place to sell it so they have to dump it. They want to dump it into Canada when our system is working perfectly. They also use a growth hormone in their product. We do not use that here. We do not want that here, and we want to maintain supply management in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: He knows his stuff.

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

Trump attack on Canadian dairy industry

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The dairy industry is very valuable to the economy of PEI. ADL employs 250 people across the province, and approximately 150 people in the Summerside plant.

Minister: Should Prince Edward Island dairy farmers and Canada's dairy industry be concerned about President Trump's attack on the industry?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

The hon. member does bring up a great point there because ADL is a key factor in the dairy industry in PEI. I was very pleased I served on the board of directors there for six years while I was milking cows, and it was absolutely a terrific employer and a terrific benefit and bonus for the dairy producers on Prince Edward Island.

Our Canadian ambassador to the US has written to the governors in New York State, in Wisconsin, to explain to them that we're quite upset by what is happening here. They, in the States, would love to have a supply management system that we have here. They, in turn, are working with the government in the States to explain to them that Canada is not the problem. Over-supply in the States is the problem.

We still are concerned, but Dave MacNaughton, our Canadian ambassador to the federal government, Minister MacAulay as well, is working on this issue very strong. We're still concerned. We will still keep pushing the issue and negotiating very strongly, but I think we need an educational lesson on the dairy industry for the President of the United States of America.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Measures in government's Internet strategy

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's spring 2017 and after years of delays, secrecy and broken promises, this tired Liberal government is still talking about having an Internet strategy. Recently, the minister introduced, really, a flawed and insecure Internet speed test which many Islanders feel is really redundant and this is a question for the minister of economic development.

Other than reinventing the wheel with an Internet speed test, what specific measures are in your tired Liberal government's Internet strategy?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Every time I rise on high-speed Internet in Prince Edward Island, it gives me an opportunity to tell exactly what our government is doing and what it has been doing, and the proactive approach that we've taken with this issue.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: We won't get to see the answers until tomorrow.

Mr. MacDonald: We are working with ISPs. We're working with communities.

Mr. Myers: You're buffering until tomorrow.

Mr. MacDonald: I think if anybody reads *The Guardian*, they're going to see that places like Seawood Estates; our staff has met with Kingston last week, a Kingston community. We're working very diligently on this issue.

What we're trying to do is create a fair marketplace for the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: We forever hear from the opposition: Get into the issue. Then the next day we hear: Get out of the issue. I don't know if it's a confused Conservative opposition instead of a tired Liberal government, but I think they're more confused than we are tired.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) be on (Indistinct) YouTube page.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) Live at Five.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We keep hearing a lot of talk from this tired Liberal government: We think we're going to go one way. We think we're going another. We've got a contract. We're not going to release the contract. We are going

to release the contract; call our office and we'll get back to you. Wait a minute, just call us. We'll take the information. No wait a minute, we're going to have a speed test.

No wonder people are confused.

An Hon. Member: No FOIPP.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: We're not confused. The people of PEI are confused.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) confused.

Mr. Trivers: A question to the minister of economic development: When will your tired Liberal government's Internet strategy actually be released to the public?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) hear there's an event Monday night somewhere about it.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This has been a priority, and for the hon. member getting up; I think I clearly stated in the public about the contract, that it was released, and that went nowhere.

Forward we march on as a government, being proactive, working with ISPs, working with communities. We have arranged a project to go through policy board. I think the date was April 27th. It's gone to Executive Council where we can start to utilize infrastructure that the government owns. Crown land, schools, hospitals where we start to place towers to alleviate some of these issues.

If the hon. member can continuously stand up and say we're not doing anything, that's completely false, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) confused (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Fake questions.

Speaker: Okay, hon. members, let's have some order.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Financial support for communities and businesses in Internet strategy

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister says he's taking action, but we're just not seeing it, at least out in my district and across the Island. People are still wondering: Where is my reliable high-speed Internet?

The CRTC has referred to Internet access as a basic right. But after nearly a decade of delays many Islanders are simply tired of waiting. They're just waiting and waiting to get high-speed Internet.

In my district, the Resort Municipality, for example, together with local businesses and residents are showing the leadership lacking from this tired Liberal government and they're taking action.

Mr. R. Brown: That's good.

Mr. Trivers: Yes, it is good.

This is a question to the economic development minister: Will your Internet strategy contain financial support for communities, businesses and residents who partner to develop local solutions for the lack of reliable high-speed Internet access?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At the beginning of the hon. member's statement and then question I almost thought he forgot to Seawood Estates was in his riding.

We're working with Seawood Estates and we're working with other communities right

across Prince Edward Island. We've done the same thing in Maximeville. We sent out an RFP in relation to ISPs wanting to provide Internet services in those areas; how we can help.

We promised that there would be monetary funding if it was a request from a community or an organization or a body. Kingston was another one. I think Milton was another community that is talking about it.

What we're doing is we're creating a fair playing field for the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island. We're ensuring – we're putting ISPs on charge to say: Listen, we need this and we need it now, and we want a better service for Prince Edward Island. That's what this government is all about; protecting the taxpayers of PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Tourism industry engagement with Internet strategy

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What the people of PEI are looking for is leadership on this issue. They're out in their communities and a lot of these are unincorporated communities. They're looking for this province to step up and lead the way and say: We are going to help you get reliable high-speed Internet. But they're sitting out there and they're waiting in the cold. It's only when leaders within our community are taking initiative to make things happen that things do.

Question for the minister of economic development: How was the tourism industry engaged in the development of this tired Liberal government's Internet strategy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know in the first question the hon. member mentioned the speed test. We have had over 5,000 people reply to that speed test. We're finding all of the grey areas and we're going to share those grey areas with the public and with the ISPs and we'll move forward.

Working with tourism industry, I don't think anybody is going to argue that the tourism industry is one of the best industries on Prince Edward Island, as far as I'm concerned, and they contribute \$430 million to expenditures that help pay for services in healthcare and education.

We are going to continue to build in those industries. It is a priority of this government for Internet services. But to run cables across Prince Edward Island is \$200 million. Who is going to pay for that?

We have priorities in healthcare and education that we have to look at, too. Economic development and Internet solution is a priority.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

High-speed Internet access for businesses in tourism sector

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, my phone is ringing off the hook with tourism operators that are worried they are not going to have reliable high-speed Internet for this upcoming season.

If the minister thinks you need to run cables, \$200 million worth of cables all across PEI to provide high-speed Internet access to Islander then he obviously does not understand the technology that is there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: The urgency to develop solutions, shown by groups like the Resort Municipality is very much economics driven. Lack of reliable high-speed Internet is a non-starter for many tourists when they try to make their vacation plans.

Question for the economic development

minister: I want to know, what specific measures are there from your tired Liberal government to address the lack of high-speed Internet for communities and businesses in the tourism sector for this upcoming season?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Sounds like he's going to run extensive cords all over PEI.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said before, we have met with several communities. We're working with communities. We're providing funding to certain communities to help them achieve better Internet access. We'll continue to do that.

We're offering Crown land. We have – went to policy board about putting towers on schools, on hospitals, on other pieces of infrastructure.

The hon. member realizes this. We have spoken about this several times. He fully understands that government is proactive on this case and will continue to be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Department of Rural and Regional Development engagement in high-speed Internet initiatives

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm really getting a lot of talk, but not a lot of action from the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

I'd like to direct this question to the Minister of Rural and Regional Development. Cynics might think that your department was created to bring you back inside with the Liberal Caucus –

Mr. R. Brown: No!

Mr. Trivers: – and stop the we-the-Wes-movement. Cynics would say that.

I hope your department can make a real difference.

Minister: What are you doing in your department to bring the reliable high-speed Internet so desperately needed for rural and regional development?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, hon. member.

First of all, I'd like to say, I'd like to think I'm in this position because of my passion for rural Prince Edward Island.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, what I'm doing the work for – my department is doing the work, working very closely with the capable minister of tourism and economic development.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The final question will come from the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Tabling of Mill River contract (further)

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For weeks and weeks, as a matter of fact, for years, the opposition has been trying to get information from this government, this tired Liberal government, they like to hide facts from Islanders. They don't want Islanders to know. Like, the member from Morell said yesterday: It took seven years for you to finally come clean on the Bell deal. You hide about – you hiding from Islanders e-gaming, yet today.

Question to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism: Has Billy Dow

given you the permission to release that contract for Mill River, yet?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure of the hon. member's math, but I've only been here two years and the contract was released less than two years.

Mr. Myers: Weak. Minister of extension cords.

Mr. MacDonald: As far as the Mill River contract, I think that we have stated clearly in this House the benefits to rural Prince Edward Island and this area, the financial aspect of it, the spin-offs to other businesses, the jobs, having a new property, new investments in that capital project. Integral.

One member talks about tourism industry and how important it is, the other member doesn't seem to care. I get it.

An Hon. Member: He gets it.

Mr. MacDonald: There is a process in place to go through to release contracts with third parties. We are in that process, but I can tell you. If I can release that contract, I'll do the exact same thing I did with the Bell contract. I will release it, and it could be as soon as next week.

An Hon. Member: Oh, there you go.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: We'll release it in 2019. Don't worry.

[End of Question Period]