



Session:	2/65
Date:	12 May 2017
No:	64

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

FRIDAY, 12 MAY 2017

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Inside information and resignation of minister (further)

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

Question to the Premier: Given the true facts that have been exposed over the last number of days, why have you not asked for the Minister of Finance's resignation for passing insider information with connected Liberal friends?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I have said it in the House earlier in the week, and I'll say it again: I asked the Minister of Finance to take on his role on May 20th, of 2015. He has brought three budgets forward. He has led the government and the public service and, indeed, this House, in the consideration and effective delivery of the financial plan that's put forward in those budgets, including the one that was presented in April starting out this session, with a balanced Budget, a modest surplus. He is exercising great financial leadership and he has my confidence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Financial services companies and Canadian tax laws

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

In the fall of 2015 our caucus uncovered government's sales pitch brochure for four financial services companies, which instruct them to avoid and how to avoid Canadian tax laws.

The Premier's office blamed a civil servant and said management would never have sanctioned such a brochure.

Question to the Premier: Do you stand by your explanation given by your own office that day?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we are in the business of promoting the economy of this province. Indeed, you can see the results of that.

Our view, and it's one that is shared, I'm sure, by all sides of this House, is that, that economy functions well and most effectively when everybody performs by the rules, above board and pays their taxes. We are all for that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hiring of CEO

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

Promoting economical growth to your friends is not the right way.

Premier: Can you explain why this person was hired directly from his government's point position on financial services as the new CEO of a company you own a significant stake in?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I have to confess, I'm not sure what the hon. member is referring to. Whatever business dealings I have are within a trust arrangement as required by our conflict of interest legislation.

He, may, indeed, be referring to something that I'm not aware of.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

This person was government's investment officer for four financial services and gaming. This is a fact. It is also a fact that the Premier's company hired him directly from this role to become their new CEO.

Question to the Premier: Why is it that you know much more, and have much more direct ties to the file than you have let on to?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I have to confess I don't know what it is that the Leader of the Opposition is referring to, but if he can shed some light on it, I may be able to make some inquiries. But if it's something that is being done by a firm, in which I may have an involvement, I am in no position to comment since I don't know what he's referring to.

I don't take part in any business dealings, which is, in fact, the arrangements that anyone who has a Cabinet role has under the conflict of interest legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Gov. senior director attendance at Sibos Conference

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In 2012-2013, Innovation PEI paid \$43,000 for consulting services in the financial services industry. The same year, the government's senior director was secretly contacted by CMT clients promoting his attendance at the 2012 Sibos Conference, a major financial services tradeshow.

Government was poaching clients five days after the exclusive MOU, which the finance minister breach ran out.

Question to the Minister of Finance: How is it with all this mounting evidence is the exact opposite to your own version of the same events?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you Mr. Speaker.

I find myself standing again today, as I have for the past three days, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Trivers: Hard to remember what you said.

Mr. Roach: No difficulty remembering what I said or what I did, or my involvement in any of this. I was advised by a staff member in July of 2012 that staff is entering into an MOU to have discussions with individuals about a financial platform on PEI and that's fine. That was the end of it. I was advised again via – I was copied on an email indicating that there was going to be another meeting at some point in time and I did not give any direction to anyone at any time with respect to those two particular dates.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

E-gaming file still active

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chris LeClair and the now finance minister took all this confidential intellectual property and they sucked up all the industry contacts and ran. No wonder these guys are suing them. Now the finance minister also sent his senior director to Sibos in the fall of 2013 and the fall of 2014.

Question to the minister of economic development: Will you admit, despite what the finance minister and the Premier are telling us, that this file is still active?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I believe in referencing the information that I read from the Auditor General's report, that file was being led by the former finance minister. I can tell you from my position in my seat, as the Minister of Finance, that there's nothing going on and there hasn't been to my knowledge.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Government actions

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course Sergeant Schultz knows nothing. That's the Sergeant Schultz routine. That's why I didn't ask him the question. I asked the minister of economic development because it's in his shop.

Yesterday the Premier said he wanted to talk about the present, so let's talk about the present. This minister and his government are still chasing these schemes. After the 2015 election, the economic development minister sent the same senior director to Europe to attend a summit. Despite the minister mislabeling the budget handout, we all know the senior director attended an international transfer agency summit in Dublin.

Question to the minister of economic development: Why are government's actions the direct opposite of what this finance minister and this Premier are telling this House?

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

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I think everyone in the province knows how aggressive this government is to attract new business to Prince Edward Island and we're going to continue to do that.

The province is doing very well economically and we're going to keep

pushing that envelope and we're going to go around the world and we're going to look for new business to come here. We've seen some transactions the last couple of days that obviously Prince Edward Island is a good place to do business and we're going to keep promoting that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Response to Innovation PEI and British consultants

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So this economic development minister spent big money hiring a large British consulting firm to target the keynote speakers of this event. This is an example of the response Innovation PEI and their British consultants received: Given that my company fulfills a similar role to Simplex and being aware of that on-going issue, I'm sure that the timing of a meeting would be great.

Question to the minister of economic development: Why are government's actions the opposite of what the finance minister and the Premier keep telling this House?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, since I've been elected in May, 2015, I have no recollection of any innuendo that the hon. member is talking about here today. To that degree, it would be remiss for me to even discuss any issues relevant to that or get into a debate with the hon. member.

What we're doing on the side – we've been accountable and transparent. We've exposed contracts that they've asked for. We've dealt with the Auditor General's report. We've put a real pressure on our bureaucratic process to ensure accountability and transparency and we're going to continue to

do that. That's what good government does and we're having good success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Finance minister funnelling information

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure how government operates. There doesn't seem to be any minister over there knows anything that's going on in their own department. It's funny that the company that I'm talking about has a quote from Brad Mix on it and I'll table these documents today and maybe you should talk to Brad Mix and get up-to-speed on the files that are inside the department.

Government is running these files even though the industry is aware the finance minister funnelled inside information and Liberal insiders get preferential access here on Prince Edward Island. The minister's senior directive states in his endorsement to the British consultant's website that innovation has been paying them for four years.

Minister: Why does mounting evidence run opposite to what this tired Liberal government is telling this House?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I know that several times the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters has made accusations on this floor about me funneling inside information. I've looked all through this. I've looked at the information that was supplied to me as a person receiving the email. It simply goes through five things that took place. There was a meeting, there was another subsequent meeting to discuss next steps, they're talking to the development folks, they're meeting later that week and they talk about the nature of the hub and any perspective work that may come out of that.

Mr. Speaker, if the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters wants to step outside the rail –

Mr. Myers: And I will.

Mr. Roach: – and accuse me of funnelling insider information.

Mr. Myers: Let's go.

Mr. Roach: I'll look forward to that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Government actions (further)

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The reason I'm not asking the finance minister questions today is I think he should resign, as does our whole caucus and as do Islanders. I'm sick of it. I'm sick of it. He needs to resign. He needs to put at least some respectability back into this profession called politics. He needs to resign today. The Premier knows it. Every face over there knows it. Look at them. They know it. I'm not asking you question because you need to resign.

Economic development minister: We know what you guys are up to. We know you're still running this scheme. You have Brad Mix making comments on this large British company's website. I have all the emails and I'm going to table them today. It's time to come clean. Islanders are sick of your secret deals – of your backroom Liberal deals that only your friends seem to get in on. We have learned this government has a top-secret financial services strategic plan – one endorsed by this Premier and Cabinet.

Minister of economic development: Why are the facts and your secret strategic plan on finances opposite to absolutely everything that we have been told by this Premier and by this finance minister in this House?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You know, having the opportunity to rise to my feet and talk about the good things this government is doing right across – starting in West Prince and right to East Isle and stopping right in the middle of the hon. member's district. For what we've done with many capital projects and investments, it's been unbelievable for the Province of Prince Edward Island and how we're growing the economy in less than two years.

I don't foresee any issues and relevance to my staff. I think they do a tremendous job in prospecting companies around the world. They're talking to many individuals and many governments and trying to persuade companies to come here to invest on Prince Edward Island.

You can go to Trout River, there's a US company involved in that – Frontier Power Systems Inc. East Isle fabrications, Aspin Kemp, the Humpty Dumpty plant now that has New Leaf Essentials in there. In Slemmon Park we're working closely with the town of Borden and SCI. We saw what we did with McCain Foods and the list goes on. We'll continue to do that and we'll continue to prospect companies in other provinces, territories, and around the globe.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Delayed construction of Riverview Manor replacement

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, for far too long, we've debated this tired Liberal government's excuses for delaying construction of the badly-needed Riverview Manor replacement.

To the finance minister: What's this year's excuse shaping up to be for not replacing the Riverview Manor?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government has made a commitment to replace both the Riverview Manor and the Tyne Valley Manor. In the capital budget at 2016, we finalized the envelope of money that was going to be required to build both those facilities. We have had planning going on by staff and community members and I want to thank them for all the work that they've done.

We have recently received back seven tender packages related specifically to Riverview Manor. We're in the process of reviewing those.

I want to thank – and the Premier has sent letters out to the staff and residents of Riverview area and Tyne Valley area – commitment, and our commitment, and the patience that they've had, too, during this planning stage, and we will be proceeding with those in the very near future, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I believe there's nine tenders out for the Riverview Manor, and –

Ms. Biggar: Just got seven back.

Expired permit for manor

Ms. Compton: They were put out last winter and in the spring, but none have been awarded. A \$20,000 building permit was acquired last year and expired before being used.

A question to the transportation minister: What's the delay in awarding these tenders and getting the shovels in the ground?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As you noted, there were a total of nine packages related to Riverview Manor. Seven of those were the ones that have just closed, and when we finish reviewing those, we will be proceeding with starting construction on both the manors in Montague and Tyne Valley.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Treasury Board funding approval for manor

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A question to the finance minister: Has Treasury Board approved funding for the manor replacement yet?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the hon. minister of transportation just stated, those tenders have come back in. Once tenders come back in, they review them and they go through a process, and those packages then come to Treasury Board. When those packages come to Treasury Board, we'll deal with them, and it'll just continue on until the work gets done after that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Federal funding for Riverview Manor

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over the last eight years, we've heard a lot of excuses for why this commitment hasn't been met. Just in the last two years alone, we've heard it depended on federal cost

sharing, either through infrastructure funding or the new health deal.

A question to the Minister of Finance: Has federal funding been secured to cost-share replacement of the Riverview Manor this year?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I noted, and if the member would like to go back and look at the capital budget of 2016 in the fall, November, that was approved.

Mr. Myers: And 2015, 2014, 2013 –

Ms. Biggar: The full amount of funding for –

Mr. Myers: Have to go right back to (Indistinct) 2007.

Ms. Biggar: – for the costs related to both those manors are in our capital budget. As noted, we've just received back seven of those tenders. Those will be put together in a package and will be taken to Treasury Board, and then we can proceed on with starting construction.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We've heard about the tenders before. We've heard about the promises.

The manor is 50-years-old and showing its age. The roof leaks. Ceiling tiles are falling to floor. The staff have to move beds to place buckets to catch leaking water from the roof.

These problems have been known about for months. Why are seniors faced to endure these living conditions?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As you know, we have identified where the new manors are being built. We've purchased the land. We have made – during this period, as was noted, there had been some issues – those have been repaired so that during this period of finalizing our plans, we want to go out and show those plans to the community when we're ready and we have our packages put together, and then go through Treasury Board, then we're very excited to take those plans out to show them to the community, what the new manors will actually look like –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: And we will look very forward to starting that construction.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've heard this story before. The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters and myself saw the drawings on the walls for Riverview Manor. They've been there. They're going to be outdated before we ever get a build.

Delayed construction of Riverview Manor replacement (further)

A question to the finance minister – this is your chance, minister, to bring a good news announcement for the Premier.

A question to the finance minister: After eight years of excuses and broken promises, when will shovels be in the ground, working on the Riverview Manor replacement?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: The end of spring. The spring's almost over.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I noted, those seven tenders just closed. We're compiling all our package together to take it to Treasury Board, and when we get it through Treasury Board, the funding is in place through capital budget, and we will be proceeding.

We are working with the community and the final planning of those areas to start construction, and we're looking very forward.

I can tell you, I hear it every day when I go to visit my mother as well, because she lives in Stewart Memorial Manor, as does the minister of health's mother, so we are very conscious of the excitement around having these new facilities in the communities. It's going to be great; a whole new concept for these residents, the way that they're living areas will be laid out.

It's going to be great for the community. I thank the community for all their input. And we look very forward to starting this project.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Yesterday, in this House, the Premier made light of an embarrassing incident when a mistakenly tabled document revealed that his government is clearly intent on manipulating public opinion.

These sorts of political games are just the latest example of how partisanship poisons our political process and damages public trust in government.

Openness and transparency of government

A question to the Premier: How many Islanders do you actually think believed

your bizarre claim that this was simply an example of your promised openness and transparency?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, our government is proud of what we're doing for Prince Edward Islanders, what we've brought forward to this House during this sitting, what we've brought forward in terms of our Budget, what we're bringing forward in terms of growth, and what we're bringing forward in terms of programs to serve Prince Edward Islanders in their priority needs.

That is part of the role of government is to be sure – and frankly, it should be part of all of our roles as MLAs – is to be sure that Islanders and our constituents are aware of the good things that we're doing, of the programs that are available to them, and how they can benefit.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Regaining trust of Islanders

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

Two years ago, there was an air of optimism regarding the Premier's arrival. He spoke eloquently about openness and transparency and on calling on our better natures. And I actually believed that he was committed to practicing politics differently.

But, in light of his refusal to honour the plebiscite, the mishandling of the school review, and his unwillingness to work collaboratively with the opposition parties, I think I speak for many Islanders: I say this optimism has largely gone.

A question to the Premier: How do you plan to regain the trust of Islanders?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I've still got my good nature. Others can speak for themselves.

But let me be sure that we are at the halfway mark in our mandate. We're doing what we said we were going to do. The province is doing well. You can go out and talk to your constituents, and I know we're all going to do that, and we're doing it all the time.

Islanders know what's happening in this province. They're positive. They can see that they're benefiting. We're proud, as a government, to be putting in place the programs, the initiatives, the fiscal leadership, and to see that the economy is doing well so that people are benefiting.

I would add that in other areas, one of them being the environment, we are continuing to offer Islanders the priority attention and the initiatives that are going to make sure that this province continues to do well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Our standing committees are generally regarded as the place where valuable political work gets done, because partisanship generally stays out of it.

But with the blatant blocking of witnesses to the committee that was looking into egaming, and the more recent events with the Special Committee on Democratic Renewal –

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Even this place, where political interference is traditionally absent has been tainted.

Mr. J. Brown: Non-political politician.

Partisanship in government

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Premier, when will you start living up to the rhetoric that you used to get elected and take steps to reduce the influence of partisanship?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I have to say up until this series of questions we weren't doing too badly this morning, which is to remind ourselves that the obligation is on all sides of this House and all three parties, and as we work beyond this House to work together, to be positive, to make sure that people understand that we do good work here and you don't have to go back any further than last night.

In fact, to a bill that we'll bring to the floor shortly this morning – we are working together. We are getting things done, and its historic the achievements that we are putting forward through the work, together, in this House.

I urge all members of this House, including the Leader of the Third Party, to use our good nature to work together and plan on doing the best we can for the people of this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Refusal of egg donation to food bank

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question this morning is for the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries. Minister, we've had many conversations about farmers and food banks and I know we're working together to bring fresh food to our food banks. Minister, there was a story yesterday of a farmer who was unable to donate her eggs to the food bank.

Why were those eggs refused?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

I did see that story. It's interesting. In agriculture, we spend so much time working and working on public trust that we talked about yesterday and food safety for our consumers. The lady that spoke yesterday, she is recognized as one of the outstanding young farmers in Atlantic Canada. She is also the agriculture critic for the Green Party and she is a fine lady, but there are rules and regulations in place.

The ag board and the department – if you want to produce eggs outside of our supply management system, you're allowed to have up to 299 laying hens on your farm. Those eggs can be sold or given away to the public if at the farm gate, or to the extension of the farm gate we include farmers' markets. In those cases, that's allowed. If they're being sold to the general public or given away to the general public, they have to be inspected.

We have federally and provincially-inspected grading places that look after so that when our eggs reach the general public they have to be inspected. If you want to go to your neighbours and buy some eggs from them or receive them free of charge, uninspected – keep in mind they are uninspected – you go right ahead. But, the general public wants eggs that are graded under regulation. They have to be inspected and that's so important. That's what happened in this case. The food bank cannot accept them for the general public if they are not inspected.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Egg grading re: selling locally

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister: What is your department doing to address the issue so our farmers have the opportunity to sell their products locally?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

We have offered in the past to individuals or a group of individuals, such as the lady mentioned there, if they want – the dollars are available if they want to set up a small egg grading station, that's fine. But, it is so key that you understand the idea of inspection.

Every egg that is inspected and sold to the general public – so if you go into the Super Store or Sobeys, or whatever it might be, and you'll see you can buy small, medium, large, extra large, jumbo or whatever it is – those eggs have been weighed and put in boxes and priced according to their size.

Prior to that, they are candeled to check each individual egg to see if there might be a crack, if there might be a trauma mark or called a blood spot, if there might be a fertilization taking place. Those are important, because when you crack that egg open you want it to be perfect and that's what our general egg producers do, and most of our farmers – I would say, perhaps, all of them do that as well.

In the general population, you're not going to see any roosters running around in the big farms. You may on the little ones, but our farmers overall do a super job. But, keep in mind when you buy your eggs at the grocery store they are fully inspected, but if you want to buy them from your local farm or your neighbour, you go right ahead but just understand they are not inspected.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Animal Welfare Act and animal protection

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is also to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Recently, there have been a couple of tragic stories in the newspaper giving an account of animal neglect and abuse. Minister, the new *Animal Welfare Act* came into effect on April the 15th. Can you tell us how this act will improve animal protection for animals?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

This is a very important move that was made. It took five and a half to six years to put in place, but we work with the veterinary association and the James Dunn group, as well as the veterinary college with our department looking at the rules and regulations with regards to animal welfare.

We looked across Canada and in some ways into the states to see: What do we need to do to change and make it the best possible legislation going forward.

Previously, an animal had to be in distress before we could intervene. We've changed that now so that we can move earlier and it is so important that we had this new legislation out and we're very pleased that it is now in place on PEI and recognized as one of the best acts with regards to animal welfare in Canada.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If Islanders suspect abuse or neglect or they have a complaint, who should they contact?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well if it's a small animal or companion animal, the group they should contact, of

course, is the Humane Society. If it's a larger animal, then you can contact our department and we will work together to make sure that animal – or that issue – is looked into. It is very important. That's what the legislation is for. We increased the fines. We increased it even to the point where there may be imprisonment, but we increased it so we can work with the owners of the animals – that they're looked after in the best way possible.

If we find real neglect, they may be banned from owning an animal for a certain length of time, but this act is there for the animals, for the people looking after animals.

Again as I say, one of the best – recognized as one of the best acts with regards to animal welfare across our country.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Minister: Is this a long process for the offenders to be dealt with?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I think it's really improved now. If someone sees an issue, feels there is an issue, they no longer have to wait and we do not – ourselves and the Humane Society – do not wait until the animal is in distress. So I think it speeded it up abundantly, really, so that now we can move and reach those animals if they need to be reached – to rescue them if they need to be rescued and I think the process has certainly speeded up. We have all our partners working side-by-side to make this whole process much, much better.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Good.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Action plan of Mental Health and Addiction Strategy release time

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

Last fall this tired Liberal government released its long-awaited Mental Health and Addiction Strategy. That day government committed to releasing a 2016-2018 action plan to support this strategy.

Question to the minister of health: It's been six long months now since the mental health strategy was released and still no action plan. Will this action plan be released during this polling period?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the issues of mental health, yes the hon. member is correct in saying that we did release a strategy for mental health and addictions back in November. Since that time, we've started to implement a number of things regarding that particular strategy.

We've got some great work that's going on for adolescents with our INSIGHT Program, our behavioural support teams are up and operational, we have our community mental health locations across the province – have now implemented some open appointment times where people can have walk-ins where they can access services. So we will continue to commence working on that particular plan and we will be evolving more details as we move forward, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Development of a provincial suicide strategy

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

Motion No. 33 that was brought forward by the opposition and was passed unanimously by this House and it calls upon government to take the necessary steps to develop a provincial suicide prevention strategy.

Again, question to the minister of health: What steps is your department taking to advance the development of a provincial suicide strategy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, once again issues around suicide and the suicide prevention is something that affects many Island families. We have done numerous – situations where we have implemented – situation where we have a psychiatrist that is on-call especially on weekends for our emergency room at the QEH.

We've also have made sure all of our RNs that are in emergency rooms are trained to standards to identify suicide prevention and implement proper protocols as the Canadian suicide prevention association has recommended.

We have also got to make sure people are aware that there are services like The Island Helpline and other mental health services that are out there to help individuals that are at risk of doing harm to themselves, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Implementing mobile health crisis unit

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

We've talked, this session, a great deal about the potential benefit to better target services and reduce emergency room bottlenecks through a mobile mental health crisis unit.

Again, a question to the minister of health: What work is being done to implement a mobile mental health crisis unit, and when can Islanders expect to see results?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: I really appreciate that question Mr. Speaker, as obviously, the hon. member has read our mental health and addictions strategy. In that strategy we've talked about investigating the process of a mobile mental health crisis team.

I think it has been noted that we have a new psychiatrist that's coming here to the province in July. I think it's Dr. Nachnani. He's a specialist when it comes to suicide prevention and mobile crisis teams. We are looking forward to him arriving, and starting to put some framework around how that mobile crisis team would operate and what it would look like, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Funding for 12-bed youth mental health facility

Mr. Aylward: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'll certainly be keeping a close eye on that false promise.

We have talked about families struggling to help at-risk youth who are having a mental health crisis, and can't access care through the inpatient youth mental health facility your government promised, but never delivered on.

Again, question to the minister of health: What are you doing to secure funding to make the 12-bed youth mental health facility your government promised a reality?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Once again, all of our facilities are available for anybody that is possibly struggling with mental health. We have a number of facilities out there.

One of the things I would say, with the Strength Program, and the services that we have at Mount Herbert, we are not seeing extensive wait times for people with addictions as it pertains. Addictions can

sometimes be a derivative of a mental health issue. We're always taking these issues very seriously. We are working forward to try to make sure we can provide the best possible services for Islanders when it comes to mental health and addictions, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Disability Support Program

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

I'm going to move onto another minister because obviously this minister doesn't know what is happening with regards to mental health and addictions here on PEI because he completely ignores the issue that the ERs here are backed up. The beds in Unit 9 are inaccessible because there are no more beds available.

It's simply a fact that there are many Islanders here on PEI that are suffering because –

Ms. Biggar: Question (Indistinct)

Mr. Aylward: – of the lack of services and resources here –

Speaker: Hon. member, he's got lots of time.

Ms. Biggar: Oh, thank you, Speaker.

Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've talked about the importance of having a good support system for Islanders living with mental health challenges.

Question to the Minister of Family and Human Services: When will Islanders living with a mental health illness be able to get help through the Disability Support Program?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Currently, any Islander, those who are suffering from mental health illness, or those suffering from any other kind of an illness, can access many supports through my program.

We have programs that help connect people to the workforce. We have a great relationship with our partners in workforce and advanced learning.

We have many programs that also help our Islanders who are suffering from mental health illness with their basic needs.

We have many programs that are there currently. Actually, the Disability Support Program, the changes that we are making. I was very proud, a few months ago, to stand and say that we will be making changes.

We are, actually, right now compiling an accessibility advisory council that are going to help us with the changes that are going to be to that program.

Over the next year, we are going to be developing that program. Hopefully, next year we will have the program up and going. We will be expanding that program to all Islanders and we won't be excluding anyone.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, your final question.

Island's mental health crisis

Mr. Aylward: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

The minister has just indicated to anyone that's out there that's waiting for and requiring these supports, wait until next year. We are going to try and have it there.

All across our province families are struggling to cope with mental health challenges and get the help they need to lead healthy productive lives. Those Islanders, their loved ones need our help.

Question to the Premier: Premier, when will your government square up to the challenges of the Island's mental health crisis and finally deliver real positive change?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the question. We are alert to the need. We are aware that Islanders are dealing with issues of mental health and addictions. We have brought forward the strategy. We have brought forward a Budget with \$35 million additional dollars for health care, including a priority for mental health care. We have put that forward in the estimates, as the Minister of Health and Wellness made clear. We have indicated that the Disability Support Program, the other programs through family and human services are being opened up and made available.

We are working. The education minister indicated that there would be these collaborative teams working in and around the schools. We are constantly looking to give better service, further service, and to work together to meet the priority needs of Islanders. We do understand that these are needs that need to be addressed and we are doing that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]