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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

TUESDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 2018

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

We all know that government spending is out of control, taxes and federal transfers are at an all-time high.

Last year, for the first time in Island history, this government collected over one billion, that's billion with a 'b' – one billion dollars in provincial taxes. Yet Islanders still keep the least of what they earn, in all of Canada.

Government and Islanders hard-earned dollars

Question to the Premier: Premier, why is your government being so stingy about letting Islanders keep more of the money they work so hard to earn?

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, our government started in 2015 with a series of credits that were followed by, for the first time in many years, by a series of changes to the basic personal amount to the point where today, more than 52,000 Prince Edward Islanders pay no provincial income tax compared to the numbers that paid provincial income tax in 2014.

We have made tax changes – the basic personal amount, the small business tax, we have been spending prudently, let me say – and I congratulate all public servants on this that we were within \$9 million of our total budget for 2017-2018.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I think the Premier needs to look around and he'll quickly realize that many of the individuals sitting with him were actually elected prior to 2015 when this Liberal

government actually came into power back in – what are we looking at – 2007.

The basic tax exemption that the Speaker – sorry the Premier talks about – actually works out to 27 cents a day, 27 cents of extra income that Islanders can keep a day.

Furnace oil today at the pump is 91.2 cents a litre, so that extra 27 cents a day won't help Islanders struggling to heat their homes and make ends meet.

Question to the Premier: Why are you collecting record amounts from Islanders in taxes, but only giving back 27 cents a day?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Twenty seven cents a day translates into more than \$100 a year –

Mr. Myers: No, it doesn't. It's \$98. Do the math.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and we may, in the course of this sitting, have an opportunity to increase from what was \$500 adjustment to the basic personal amount to make that \$1,000, all in the year 2018.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) \$196.

Premier MacLauchlan: Another opportunity to leave money in the pockets of Prince Edward Islanders who are working hard, more working all the time, there are 7,000 –

Mr. Myers: Twenty minutes in a parking metre in (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – fulltime jobs in Prince Edward Island today that we didn't have in 2016. That's why Islanders are doing so well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The Premier, off the top, spoke about the Island being on its tear. The only tear I see is Islanders, unfortunately, tearing out to the food banks; Islanders, unfortunately, going to the local service station to fill up Jerry cans to take oil home because they can't afford home delivery.

Twenty-seven cents a day is cold comfort for Islanders struggling to get by. In fact, it's a slap in the face after 10 long years of tax increases, and the higher costs of living by this Liberal government. Islanders want to get ahead and not just barely get by.

I have long advocated for the personal basic tax exemption be tied to the consumer price index to put Islanders on a more equal footing with workers in other provinces.

Personal tax exemption and CPI

Question to the Premier: Will you commit to tie the basic personal tax exemption to the CPI so that Islanders can better keep pace with the rising costs of living that your government has forced on them?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I am well aware that the Leader of the Opposition has advocated for tying the basic personal amount to the cost of living, which as of the September report from Statistics Canada increased by 1.7% in the past 12 months.

Since we came to government, the basic personal amount has changed by 33% which is a lot more than CPI –

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, why would (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: I have no appreciation for why the Leader of the Opposition is talking about tying it, in fact reducing or limiting the increase or the change that our government has made and will continue to make, and we're going to make further in the course of this sitting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: Now your math is perfect. A few months ago (Indistinct) what the cause is, it's you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let's set something straight right off the bat. I just received this message at 2:15, Mr. Premier, and it flies right in the face of what you've been talking about.

I want to explain to you how important a bus is to us. We are on a tight budget. Today an emergency came up; we've been waiting for a doctor since 9:00 a.m. I bought groceries yesterday this means we have food at home. I have four kids with me and it's 2:15 and they haven't eaten. I have to decide between feeding them something that will deliver to the PCH today or having gas money to get them to school the rest of the week. A bus would make this decision much easier.

As the Leader of the Opposition has stated, this government keeps on nickel and diming.

Rise in cost of driver's license

Question to the transportation minister: Could the minister explain why the cost of a driver's license has gone up 40% in the last six years?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are always working on ways –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – that we can make things more affordable for our residents, our drivers. We have 110 registered cars on our registration who do those renewals on up to three years now. When we change that we have the fees that they can do it on a three-year basis.

We're always looking at ways that we can help Islanders save money. We'll continue to look at those registration costs and see where the need is and we'll continue to explore those opportunities.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, going up 40% in six years is a huge increase, but you're giving back 27 cents.

Question to the transportation minister: Regional procurement has lowered the production of driver's licenses, so why did the cost go up 40%?

An Hon. Member: Good question.

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

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have gone to an Atlantic procurement model, which requires us to – the individual to come in and renew their license and their picture is taken, but it's sent to a central office for processing. They have 10 days that it comes back to them during that time. They do have a receipt that they can produce.

In regard to how we have amalgamated those services together, it actually involves a new technology that will ensure –

Mr. Myers: Camera, a camera and a printer.

Ms. Biggar: – that their licenses are protected from fraud. There is also ability within that license to add other technologies to it. So, we are working on new technology which we think will help Islanders in the long run.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think I just got a headache, but that's all right because we're giving back 27 cents.

Rise in cost of motor vehicle inspection

Question to the transportation minister: Could the minister explain why motor vehicle inspections and the fees associated went up over 50% in the last six years?

Mr. Myers: Oh, good question.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll take that under advisement and bring that back to the member.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Well, let's continue, Mr. Speaker.

Let's not forget about the 27 cents.

Question to the transportation minister: Did the motor vehicle inspection itself increase by half or just its cost?

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, we work very closely with our inspection services stations to ensure that the inspections that are happening there are carried out in a way that is most effective way for Islanders. Those costs are borne by the inspection station, and come back to the individual who was getting their car inspected.

So we want to ensure that those costs that are associated with that are getting the best service that they can and we will continue to work along those lines with the inspection stations, and ensure that when they are incurring those costs that Islanders are assured that when they're getting inspections done that they are doing it to the best of their ability.

Mr. R. Brown: Great; great answer.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, don't blame the gas station and the garage owners for the inspection fees going up. You put them up.

Since 2012, the cost of to register a utility trailer has gone up by 50%.

Government tax grab on Islanders

Question to the transportation minister:
What's the justification for this tax grab on Islanders?

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

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, as statistics have shown there are more and more vehicles on the road, and during that time, because of that, we do have to incur more cost to make sure that our services provided to the travelling public are efficient.

So, all of those fees or those dollars that you're talking about go back into providing services to Islanders to make sure that the roads that they're travelling on are the most efficient they can be. –

Mr. Myers: Or a \$75 million surplus.

Ms. Biggar: – to make that transportation connection for those trailers to ensure that when they're travelling, that the roads that they're on, that our farmers are on, that our fishers travel, that our products go to market, they're all incurred in those costs to ensure that we can provide the best services that we can.

We're spending over \$8 million just on that, on just paving alone. We did 120 kilometres of paving on those connector roads this year. All of those trailers travel those roads.

Mr. R. Brown: Great job.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think we've hit four things now that the fees have gone up over 40%-50%. Since 2012, the cost to register a snowmobile, which doesn't affect the roads, has gone up by 50%, but that's all right they give back 27 cents.

Question to transportation minister: What's the justification for this tax grab on Islanders?

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, the fee in regard to snowmobile registration all goes back to the snowmobile association except for \$10.

They have requested that we process those fees for them, so the fee that they incur for that processing is for the time that the staff is working on doing those processing. The snowmobile association gets back all of their fee except for that \$10 and we have worked with them on providing them materials –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – providing them equipment to help them on the trails, keeping the trails upgraded for them.

It all, technically, goes back into ensuring that the snowmobile association has a great trail system for their enjoyment.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) finance minister (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: Great.

An Hon. Member: Great job.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) no.

Mr. Fox: They're given back 27 cents. Every fee I've talked to has increased by 40%-60%, and since 2012, the cost to take a novice driver's course has doubled.

Cost of novice driver's course

Question to the transportation minister:
What changed in the novice driver's course to double its cost to young drivers trying to get ahead?

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

Ms. Biggar: Ms. Speaker, we work very closely with those young drivers coming into the system to ensure that the training that they get is the best training that they can receive.

We are investing in those young people to ensure that when they are on the roads, that they have the best knowledge that they can and that they have services provided to them that are going to ensure that they have the best education that they can in regard to safe driving because we want to ensure that all of our drivers out there have that training, and we'll continue to work with them in improving that training and safety programs.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: *Merci Monsieur le Président.*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

La semaine dernière, une membre du Conseil des ministres n'a pas respecté la Loi sur les services en français en matière de correspondance avec le public. Plusieurs Insulaires ont d'ailleurs trouvé sa réponse impolie.

Last week, a member of Cabinet broke the *French Language Services Act* regarding correspondence with the members of the public in a manner felt rude by many Islanders.

Training in French services for Cabinet

Question pour le premier ministre et ministre responsable des Affaires acadiennes et francophones:

Question to the Premier and Minister Responsible for Acadian and Francophone Affairs:

Quelle formation ont reçue les membres du Conseil des ministres au sujet du respect de la Loi sur les services en français?

What training and guidance have been provided to your Cabinet around respect and compliance with the *French Language Services Act*?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: *Monsieur le président.*

Mr. Speaker.

En tant que premier ministre et aussi en tant que ministre responsable des Affaires acadiennes et francophones, je suis fier des mesures que ce gouvernement a prises pour étendre, pour ajuster les domaines où la Loi sur les services en français s'applique. Justement, depuis l'an dernier il y a cinq domaines qui ont été désignés sous la Loi pour donner des services en français.

As Premier and Minister Responsible for Acadian and Francophone Affairs, I am proud of the measures this government has taken to expand, to adjust the areas where the *French Language Services Act* applies. In fact, since last year, five areas were designated under the act to provide French services.

Since last year we have added five areas of service – important areas of service – on the advice of the *French Language Services Act* advisory committee when the *French Language Services Act* is designated to offer service in French. We as a government are very proud of that, and the French community and the Acadian community are very appreciative of that and we continue to go further, Ms. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: *Merci, monsieur le président.*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

La lettre envoyée par un membre du public demandait l'appui du gouvernement à faire des rénovations à l'École Évangéline à Abram-Village, une école qui a maintenant 60 ans.

A letter sent by a member of the public to seek government support for capital repairs to the Evangeline school in Abram Village now almost 60 years old.

Priority rank for Evangeline school

Question à la ministre des transports:

Question to the minister of transportation:

Où se trouve l'École Évangéline dans la liste des priorités de rénovation des infrastructures?

Where does Evangeline school rank on the priority list for school capital repairs?

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

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

Mr. J. Brown: *Merci, monsieur le président.*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chaque année, les deux boards prennent des décisions de mettre des priorités capitales en ordre de préférence chacun.

Each year, the two boards place capital priorities in order of preference for each.

We get those. We look at them. We submit them through the capital budgeting process. We look at them across all of the 62 schools on Prince Edward Island and we are doing that this year. We expect that there will be a capital budget put before this Chamber at some point during this session and we'll have to look at what the capital priorities are going forward.

But, let me say, we take that job very seriously. We take the job of being discerning and of determining where the greatest capital priorities are across this province regardless of whether that's in the French first language system or in the English system, and we wish to see all of our students treated equally.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: *Merci, monsieur le président.*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

L'École Évangéline a été construite en 1960 et n'a jamais eu de rénovations majeures. Les problèmes comprennent le toit qui coule et le chauffage déficient dans les salles de classe.

Evangeline school was built in 1960 and has never undergone a major renovation. Issues with leaking roofs to classroom heat are common.

Timeline for repairs to Evangeline school

Question à la ministre des transports:

Question to the minister of transportation:

Quand l'École Évangéline sera-t-elle rénovée adéquatement?

When will Evangeline school be adequately renovated?

When can the community expect to see these badly needed repairs take place at Evangeline school?

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

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

This hits right to the core of what I was talking about just a moment ago and as I indicated, there is a responsibility in each of the public school boards to consider their capital requirements for the upcoming future and to put those forward in an order as they determine them, every year.

The issues that the member has spoken about did not arrive overnight, but they did just come to the top of the CSLF's priority list for this year. We will endeavour to determine where those fit in the overall capital priorities for the province, but let me say that the job of prioritizing those capital requirements is a very important job and it's not a wish list that needs to be put before the department and government each year to arrive at capital priorities for our school board.

The list has changed so much from one year to the next from the CSLF that one has to wonder where their priorities lie.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

In 2016, this government signed onto the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change. One of the key principles of the framework is that carbon pricing should be a central part of any plan in order to reduce carbon. It also recognizes that carbon pricing is the most effective and the most cost-efficient way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

However, this government has shifted its tune in recent months. The Premier no longer believes in carbon pricing.

Reduction of carbon emissions

A question to the Premier: Your government is now intent on using less effective and more expensive means to reduce emissions. How is this fiscally responsible?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me say that our government has been from the Pan-Canadian framework, and going back earlier to our participation in the Paris conference, and earlier than that to our first ministers' conference in November of 2015, committed to reducing our carbon emissions.

We know precisely what those targets are. We know that Prince Edward Islanders will meet those. We know that Prince Edward Islanders, as of today, have installed almost 2,500 heat pumps in their homes, taking us up on programs that encourage them to meet our targets. We are not of the view, as apparently the third party is, that Islanders should be taxed solely for the sake of punishing them when they in fact are meeting their targets.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

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

Mr. Myers: Just not for punishment.

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

I suppose to be fair; I should acknowledge that this government has in fact implemented a partial carbon price, though they've done their best to make the policy as ineffective as possible by reducing the price signals, which is the only thing that would incentivize Islanders to actually reduce their emissions.

Mr. Trivers: – (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – Question to the Premier –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Carbon tax plan and carbon emissions

Dr. Bevan-Baker: A question to the premier: How will your hollowed out carbon tax plan help to reduce carbon emissions?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me speak about a price signal, a price signal of \$1,200 to Islanders to acquire and install a heat pump; 2,473, as of today, have taken us up on that. It's practically a revolution; when you think about the oil, or the carbon that's being by those heat pumps by the money that Islanders are saving in their own pocket, the further price signal – by the work that it's creating throughout our economy, and meeting our carbon reduction targets. That is our program. That is the program that Islanders are accepting and responding too, and reducing their carbon footprint and we are proud of that –

Mr. LaVie: – on the ropes (Indistinct) –

Premier MacLauchlan: – and we thank Prince Edward Islanders for responding to our price signal, to our programs, and to the challenge of reducing our carbon emissions.

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 very much, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, there is a revolution underway, but it's not because of this government's policies, it's in spite of this government's policies –

Mr. R. Brown: No.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – where HST was taken off oil, but not off electricity–

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – where is the incentive for Islanders to buy –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – to buy heat pumps in that policy? This government could have simply adopted the federal backstop, which would be a decent fair and effective policy. Instead, they are acting like climate action deniers –

Mr. R. Brown: No.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – they refuse to take the decisive and the rapid action that is needed – that we all know is needed – to avoid catastrophic climate change in the next decade.

Tax on carbon pollution

A question to the premier: Why are you afraid of putting a tax on carbon pollution?

Mr. Myers: Why do you want to starve everybody?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – let me correct one point in the hon. member's question, when he made the assertion that electricity is still subject to the provincial portion of the HST. We sat in this House in the spring sitting and in fact, through the action of the finance minister and his budget, we reduced and removed that provincial portion of the HST to the extent of \$10 million.

Mr. Trivers: Whose platform was that from?

Premier MacLauchlan: And let me say that that \$10 million, which is directly in the hands of Prince Edward Islanders, in their pockets, contrary to some of the assertions from the other side, is to the benefit of Islanders. It is an incentive for them to use renewables, not only electricity, but propane, wood, and other renewable and that is why Prince Edward Islanders are responding to our price signal, to our program and to our commitment to reduce our carbon emissions, to act on climate change.

It's also because Islanders believe, and we believe, that climate change is real, that we must take action. We will meet our targets, and they are showing every day that they are doing so, and we're proud of that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Among most economists, carbon pricing is considered the most effective and efficient way to reduce carbon emissions. In fact, Yale professor, William Nordhaus, shared the Nobel Prize in economics this year for his groundbreaking work on carbon pricing.

Mr. Trivers: Read the email.

Ms. Bell: According to the royal bank, carbon pricing has been implemented in 46 national jurisdictions, and 25 sub-national jurisdictions. Yet, whenever the Premier talks about implementing a carbon price, he calls it: green tape and funny money.

I find it shocking that a man with the Premier's academic credentials has not reviewed the literature so he can engage in a meaningful debate.

Carbon pricing plan

A question for the premier: Would you like me to provide you with a reading list on how carbon pricing works?

Some Hon. Members: Oh.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker

I'll tell you how carbon pricing works in the style, as presented by the third party; is you walk down the subway and get on the subway in Toronto, or Vancouver, where they're getting their policies from. This is Prince Edward Island; these are people who are in rural communities with jobs who are trying to keep up with everything –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – who believe that we have climate change problems, who can see it all around us. Islanders are responding in the most efficient manner and probably in the highest priority manner that we can by changing the built environment. I mentioned the reduction on the rebate of the provincial portion of the HST, our program, which is now in the several million of dollars for rebates to encourage Islanders to have heat pumps.

Let me mention another area where I'm really proud of what Islanders are doing and what our government is supporting them to do and that's in home renovations. Four thousand homes – 4,000 homes have been renovated in this province with support and grants from our province and they're more energy efficient.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, when you compare your plan to other plans, you say yours is the only plan that won't cost taxpayers. This completely ignores the fact, that both the made in PEI green plan and the federal backstop are revenue-neutral, and would actually put more money back into the hands of 80% of Islanders to use as they choose.

To the Premier: When you taught –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Bell: – law at UNB –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Bell: To the Premier: When you taught law at UNB–

An Hon. Member: Funny money, funny money –

Ms. Bell: – and a student argued a position while completely disregarding most of the facts, would you give them an A or an F?

Speaker: hon. Premier.

Mr. R. Brown: We're getting an A.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Plus.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker.

In the previous question, the Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, used the words: green tape and funny money. Those were words that she repeated that I had said earlier, but I'm glad to hear that they've been understood and repeated in this Chamber.

It's very simple, what our governments approach to pricing signal for carbon is, it's to leave the money in the pockets of Islanders in the first place. We're proud of that. At the same time, as we are providing very significant incentives– very significant incentives– and Islanders are taking up those incentives – what we call: carrots not sticks. Islanders are voting with their feet, they are changing their homes, they are changing their behaviour, and they are improving our climate change record and meeting our targets. That is precisely what we're committed to do and what Islanders are committed to do.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Climate change is the most pressing issue facing humanity, and the best the Premier

can come up with are denigrating slogans that don't fairly represent other policy options.

Conduct debate on climate change

Premier, will you stop playing games with our children's futures, and begin to conduct the debate on climate change with the seriousness it deserves?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, our province, including our government, has made commitments in the pan-Canadian climate change framework to reduce our carbon emissions. We will meet those targets. They are very serious commitments. They do indeed involve significant change on the part of Islanders; and working with Islanders and working with sectors of our economy as further opportunities present themselves as innovation and technologies evolve.

Islanders take climate change seriously, and I have to say, to hear the member opposite, pretending that Islanders – because that is what you're saying – that Islanders don't take climate change seriously –

An Hon. Member: That's right.

Premier MacLauchlan: – because they are putting in heat pumps. Because they're innovating, because they're improving their homes, because they're taking up our rebates and voting with their feet – it's an insult – to Prince Edward Islanders. I hope that she is going to consider what she's saying and support our legislation when it comes forward in this sitting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Like most of the MLA's in this room, I've been asked by numerous individuals about the possibility of opening adoption records and I've asked about this in the past because I believe this is something we should strongly consider.

I know that a committee has been tasked with the weighing in on both sides of the discussion.

Opening of adoption records

So, my question today is to the Minister of Family and Human Services: Minister, has the *Adoption Act* review advisory committee completed the report on opening adoption records?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I thank you for that question, hon. Member.

Yes, the committee has completed the report and has delivered it to me; after a lengthy consultation process with Islanders both on the province, as well as elsewhere.

We heard differing viewpoints, but one thing that came out clear in the report, was that: adoption is an intensely personal and emotional subject for people who have experienced it and not everyone's experience is the same.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Islanders for opening up their hearts and sharing their stories with us, as well as the *Adoption Act* review committee, for their leadership on this work and engaging Islanders on this important topic.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great news to know that the report has been completed.

So now that you have the report, what's government going to do with it?

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

Mr. Myers: They usually put them on a shelf.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Throughout the process, again, we understood that attitudes are changing and increasingly Islanders want greater access to their personal records and to openness of the adoption records.

Again, there were wide-ranging views, both for opening adoptions records and keeping them closed. However, our government has made the decision to open adoption records, both going forward and going back.

People who have been affected by adoption in the past will have an option to protect their identity through (Indistinct) and details will be worked out in the coming months.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you Mr. Speaker.

That's wonderful news, especially to those Islanders who really have been advocating to have these records opened and I thank you for the work and I thank the committee for the work that they have done preparing this report.

Tabling of *Adoption Act* review report

Is it possible, Minister, that you could table this report and also when might these changes occur?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Currently my department is working on legislative changes that we do plan on bringing forward for the spring session, as well as a public awareness campaign, so we will be unrolling details very soon. However, we will need, once we have passed the legislative changes, we will need a year for public engagement so that we can make sure that we reach out to all those parties who are affected by adoption to make sure that they are aware of their rights and how we will be moving forward – and the records being opened for the past.

However, in the meantime, there will be a full range of post-adoption services

available through my department and I do encourage anyone whose lives have been affected by adoption to reach out to my department and see what services that they might be able to obtain.

Certainly hon. member I would be most pleased to table that report, however I do not have that with me today, so I will table it tomorrow, if that's okay.

We will also post it on our website through Family and Human Services.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Financial impact to potato growers and province

My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Minister, our potato industry has had a difficult year with weather-related issues. The indication is that possibly 10% or 100,000 acres may be still in the ground.

What financial impact will this have to our growers and to the province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just correct the hon. member; we would have about 85,000 acres of potatoes that would be planted in Prince Edward Island and we're probably around that 10% that's not harvested, so just to correct the numbers a little bit there, not to create panic out there in the industry.

Obviously, it has been a very challenging harvest season; we've had rain just about every second day and we've had extreme wind conditions and from that perspective, farmers are going to be challenged.

On the positive note is that farmers have taken up some of the safety programs that are implemented by both, our government and the federal government. A little bit over 90% of the crop is actually under crop insurance.

There are some farmers that aren't under crop insurance that also are under the AgriStability Program and some of them may tap into that particular program.

As you might be aware, we did extend the application date for the AgriStability Program.

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

Crop insurance pay-outs for potato growers

Mr. Henderson: Yes, Minister: Will the crop insurance cover these losses or will government be required to top it up?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: On the question of crop insurance: farmers are given many alternatives when their crop insurance agent actually comes to the farm in the spring of the year to determine what level of coverage the farmers are willing to purchase – and/or what risks they're willing to take.

Farmers can choose between 70% coverage, 80%, 90% coverage and they can also take a price-point on those coverages as well.

At this point in time, it's a little too early to tell what kind of numbers we're talking about as far as crop insurance and what kind of pay-outs –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: – are going to be occurred, but we do anticipate there will be pay-outs.

Speaker: The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, your second question and this will be the final question.

Mr. LaVie: You know how it works.

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deep-water wells and land acquisitions

Minister: will our major processor, will they be using the results of today to either revisit

deep-water wells, or further land acquisitions?

Mr. Henderson: Obviously, farmers are challenged by many of the elements that Mother Nature can provide to them and obviously there were some locations – really struggled with water issues, we didn't have enough moisture, especially in the western end of the Island and some in the very far east end of the Island.

As you may be aware, that under the Department of Environment, there is a study that has been ongoing by Dr. Mike van den Heuvel regarding the impacts of irrigation and impacts that might have on our river systems. I believe our government is awaiting the results of that particular report before any decisions be made as far as land holdings – that's once again under the Communities, Land and Environment and I'll pass that to that hon. member for future information on that.

Speaker: Now, hon. members, I know some of you might have nodded to me and said: do we get more questions?

Time is up. I will no longer break the rules of this House to extend Question Period no more – so judge yourselves accordingly.

Mr. LaVie: Somebody broke a rule.

End of Question Period