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

FOR

FRIDAY, 23 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.

Yesterday in Question Period the minister of education responded to one of my questions and he stated, essentially, that the commute, the drive from Stratford to Birchwood Junior High School is but a mere four-minute drive.

Travel time from Stratford to Birchwood school

My question would be to the minister of justice: Minister, how is this possible without breaking laws?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

Well, as I said yesterday, I grew up in Stratford. I went to school at Birchwood every day. We got in the car. We left home. We went in by Glen Stewart school and the Stratford Esso. We left Stratford as we went onto the bridge. We went across. We turned right at about Holland College and we drove up the road there, and Birchwood, I think, is about five blocks up the street and there we were four minutes later.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Laughter]

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: You got lost.

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

Well, it sounds like the minister of justice probably drives through every red light and speeds everywhere he goes.

In last week's capital budget, it was announced that and I quote: Government will commence a comprehensive school infrastructure review to determine which of our schools will require renovation or replacement over the next few years.

School infrastructure review

Question to the education minister: When will that school infrastructure review go to public tender?

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

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

As I've said here previously in this Chamber, we are currently setting the funds up to do that work. At that point in time, the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy would usually work with our department to determine the parameters of that work and he might be able to do it, and from there it would go through a process where the award of the work would be authorized in one way or another pursuant to Treasury Board policy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Well, 18 months ago government went through a very divisive and ultimately unsuccessful exercise to close a number of Island schools, the second such exercise in less than 10 years.

School infrastructure review re: closures

Question to the education minister: Shouldn't a comprehensive school infrastructure review have been done before government embarked on these divisive school closure exercises?

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

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

I just want to ensure that the member understands what it is that we're setting out to do. What I've indicated previously is that we will be taking a look at the schools that are past a certain age and we will be looking at the structure of those schools from an engineering or an architectural perspective, and we'll be looking at what may be required to keep those schools up as we go forward.

We're all aware that that is required on an ongoing basis and probably needs to be done from time to time, and has not been done in this sort of way previously, and has led to an ad hoc planning process in terms of renovations and school capital planning.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

According to government, 70% of Island schools are now 30 years of age or older. It would seem to me that a school infrastructure review like this should have happened long ago.

As an example, we had the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid that had to advocate for his own school because of the leaking roofs and buckets being placed all over the school. So, it took an opposition member to get action on this.

School infrastructure review (further)

Question to the education minister: Why is government only looking at doing a review like this now, 12 years into your mandate?

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

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

I can't speak too much for what might or might not have happened before my time in the department, but let me say this, and this is not to take anything away from the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, the Public Schools Branch has staff – devoted staff, I should say, that do this kind of work every day, day in and day out.

They know the schools that are there. But, on an ongoing basis we would look at different schools and the shape that they're in from a structural perspective and we would like to determine, with this project and the needs with our growing population, how we best serve those students.

The hon. member mentioned the review process; we now know where our population is growing, what our capacity is and we're working to serve those students.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Us out in Mount Stewart, we're getting sick and tired of sitting and looking and assessing so we took action and made sure that was fixed.

Mr. Myers: Good job, good MLA right there. Good MLA, that's how (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: Mr. Speaker, yesterday we were talking about the scope of practice with the health minister and we were talking about the pharmacy association, and I have no doubt that the minister has probably set that up already and I hope it's happening soon.

One group – that I have to give credit to the minister he did meet with was the physio association and we hope to see some good things happening there.

Filling physiotherapist positions in Souris

The minister mentioned yesterday about 10.5 full-time equivalent positions being unfilled right now when the good Member from Souris-Elmira talked about it.

What's he doing to fill those positions, Mr. Speaker?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Back in November of 2017 we created a program, the PEI Physiotherapy Sponsorship Program. Physiotherapists are much sought after in the medical health field all across Canada.

We created a sponsorship program that was a return-to-service program for physiotherapists that were in training. It was a three-year return to service up-front funding, and that's worked well. Since that time – since that creation and implementation in the spring of 2018, it has recruited three physiotherapists to PEI; two that have been here already, one that will be coming in the New Year.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. LaVie: Fake news.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're still severely understaffed and I understand at the QEH, this understaffing with physio is causing the length of stay in the medical and orthopedic units to be longer. If we don't have the physio resources that we need there, the patients aren't going to get better and out the door quicker.

Length of stay for patients at QEH

What is the minister doing to help these units at the QEH reduce these lengths of stays by adding physio resources?

Mr. LaVie: He's working hard – working hard.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe currently there are 18.5 full-time physiotherapist positions at the QEH, but the hon. member is correct. There are vacancies there. We continue to recruit through the sponsorship program, but at the present time that is for dedicated service in rural Prince Edward Island.

As I had mentioned yesterday in questioning earlier, that we do quite often partner with private physiotherapists to come in and fill

gaps and vacancies from time to time and that practice does continue, but we are out recruiting and trying to bring new physiotherapists to PEI.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) Charlottetown.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad the minister mentioned about the rural areas because we don't run any programs in the communities for Islanders waiting for consultation or orthopedic surgeons.

Private physiotherapy programs

Why don't we have our public physiotherapists running programs out in the community for these people waiting?

Mr. LaVie: Exactly.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We work very closely on any vacancies within any of the medical health professionals. The development of this program has proved to be very successful. We will continue to work on that program.

Obviously, there are vacancies across Prince Edward Island as we speak, but some of them, as well, are maternity leaves and we know the physiotherapists that are off on maternity will be back in their year from their leave.

Mr. LaVie: Two years now.

An Hon. Member: Maybe they're against maternity leave over there.

Mr. Mitchell: Partnering with the private physiotherapists has also been very successful on PEI. We continue to do that when we have opportunities.

Mr. LaVie: You didn't do anything when you were health minister.

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct) the contract. Contracted out.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We continue to talk about scope of practice, and physiotherapists are another health professional that could use the full extent of their scope of practice. All physiotherapists in PEI are experts in exercise prescription and postoperative rehabilitation. Some have additional postgraduate training in specialty areas like neurology, women's health, oncology, pediatrics, and sports physiotherapy.

Utilization of training of physiotherapists

Question to the health minister: How are we utilizing the training and expertise of physiotherapists in these specialty areas?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly as health minister of Prince Edward Island, I absolutely value to qualifications of physiotherapists. It is essential to the health system of Prince Edward Island to have Islanders that need their services so that they can get on with their life, they can get out of hospital if they're in there, or go and visit from home. It's absolutely an essential service that these physiotherapists provide.

We will continue to support them in their training. We will continue to support them with resources and supports when needed. If that is partnering with private physiotherapists, if that is continuing on with the program and going out – if the program is something that can be enhanced and made better, we'll look at that too. It's very important that these physiotherapists with a very, very particular training, is very essential to PEI.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Home care is vital service for patients who lack the mobility to travel to medical appointments, and it's an area where physiotherapists can play a very, very valuable role.

Health accord dollars re: physio to home care services

I have another question to the health minister: How are we using the federal health accord dollars to expand the reach of physiotherapy to patients who use home care services?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Home Care on Prince Edward Island is so valuable. I've met with Home Care workers, you know RNs, LPNs, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and that is what's allowing a lot of our seniors to be home, to support families of older Islanders –

Mr. LaVie: You reading a paragraph –

Mr. Mitchell: – that need this service. Physiotherapists are part of that system and with a new federal funding agreement, our focus is on enhancing our Home Care system and things are moving forward there as well.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Many repetitive strain injuries and chronic conditions can be successfully managed without surgery when patients have timely access to physiotherapy services. Ideally, that timely access should happen through our primary care network.

Incorporating physio into primary care

Another question to health minister: What's being done to incorporate physiotherapy even more into our primary care network?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: Like to hear this one.

Mr. Mitchell: As I said, physiotherapists provide a valuable service on PEI. They're much sought after.

As far as primary care, I know often if people go to their family physician or their family provider – may be a nurse practitioner – they often get referred for physiotherapy at some of our private clinics around the region. In some cases that works fine, but in other cases they need to be referred to in the medical system care at the QEH or other hospital facilities.

We do know there are vacancies there, we are working with others to try to fill the vacancies, but the physiotherapists – we've had great meetings on their needs, and we'll look at working with them further.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Construction delays and early winter weather have disrupted the timelines for a project to update a water pipe infrastructure in Parkdale.

Discussions re: water pipe infrastructure in Parkdale

Question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: What discussions have you, or your department had with the City of Charlottetown about this project?

Speaker: The Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

That's a great question. Particularly, there was a public meeting the other night and there was a lot of concern brought up about this project and some of the delays that are occurring. Winter arrived early. Construction has gone along pretty good over the last couple of months, but winter has arrived early.

I can assure the residents that the department, my department, and the

analytical lab are working closely with the City of Charlottetown in order to monitor this program and to monitor the testing of water.

We are working closely with the City of Charlottetown to make sure that this project continues to keep going, and we will continue to work with the City of Charlottetown to ensure that water quality is good.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think there are 124 affected residents in the area who've now been asked to leave their taps running if the temperature goes below freezing, which is pretty much all the time right now. This project could go on until Christmas or even longer with the worsening winter weather, it probably will.

Discussions with watershed group re: water pipe infrastructure

Question to the environment minister: Has your department discussed this project with the Winter River-Tracadie Bay Watershed group?

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

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

It's another great question.

We do work with the Winter River group. I know there are concerns from the Winter River group that running the water all the time is going to affect the water levels. We're just lucky that this year has been a substantial amount of rainfall. I can assure the people that water levels in the Winter River are good, but we are monitoring this system.

The reason we're allowed to do that and work with the City of Charlottetown, because in 2010, the first ever permit was issued under the water extraction permits. I was proud to be a part of that.

So we are working with the city, we're making sure that the water levels are there,

we're making sure that the water quality is there. Richard MacEwen, at the City of Charlottetown, I know they're working around the clock in order to get this project under control and in on time. There was a delay.

I must also thank the City of Charlottetown, because they are using the technology here instead of ripping up millions of dollars worth of infrastructure. They are using a new system, which is relining the pipes and saving the city residents a lot of money.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know the Winter River-Tracadie Bay Watershed supplies most of the water, much of the water for the capital city. The area watershed group estimates that over seven million litres a week could be used in the affected area. If this project lasts another month, that number could rise to 30 million litres or more.

Concern for water conservation

Question to the environment minister: Does this approach give you any concern for water conservation?

Speaker: The Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. R. Brown: Under the great leadership of Eddie Rice that was the water commissioner there for a number of years, the City of Charlottetown has reduced its water use to 1990 levels. That's a substantial amount of reduction in water levels.

I know the water department at the City of Charlottetown, because I was chairman of the water and sewer committee at one time. They are a great staff, they're working hard. I know the contractor is working extremely hard.

Mr. Myers: Eddie Rice had to clean up your mess.

Mr. R. Brown: As we get each house hooked up, and each section done, that will

require less demand of the Winter River system.

We are in constant monitoring if it. We feel for the residents, but we're there with them.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, 30 million litres of water is enough to serve the entire City of Charlottetown for an entire week. That's a lot of water.

Question to the environment minister: Is a municipality required to advise your department when water volume losses of that scale are involved with a project?

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

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

As a result of the permit that was issued in 2010, the first ever in the province of Prince Edward Island for a municipality in terms of the City of Charlottetown, there is constant water monitoring going on.

We do have some concerns, but the levels are high. They continue to be high. We all know over the last two months, it seemed that it never stopped raining. So the levels are good.

We will work with the Winter River watershed area. They are a good organization. We did listen to their concerns, and we will meet with them. I know the City of Charlottetown has met with the residents. I understand that the residents have a concern. We're working with them.

We have a great, brand new analytical lab that has been built that is at full disposal of the City of Charlottetown and its system.

Mr. Roach: Great job, great work.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, this area has residential has residential home owners, businesses, a church, and an early years center with 54 students, who are among the 124 effected users. Low water pressure, frozen pipes, frozen waterlines and difficulty with snow removal are among the concerns raised by the residents at that public meeting.

Many also said project information was difficult to obtain from the municipality –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) MLA (Indistinct)

Legislative requirements re: water conservation

Ms. Compton: Question to the environment minister: What legislative requirements exist for a municipality to notify the province and effected residents when a project has drastic impact on water conservation?

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

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

Another great question; I can assure the member, and I can assure everybody in this House that the department of environment, the analytical lab out in the industrial park works with each and every municipality in order to ensure the best quality water for our residents of Prince Edward Island. The people at the analytical lab will go the extra mile to ensure that water quality is good.

I must congratulate the members at the analytical lab and the department environment staff, because they are constantly working with the City of Charlottetown staff; and the City of Charlottetown staff, I know them personally a lot of them. It is hard, hard work. Many of us would not want to be in a frozen dug out hole during this time of year –

An Hon. Member: You are right now.

Mr. R. Brown: – and they work extremely good. They are working hard; they are working 12 to 13 hours a day –

Mr. LaVie: Been there, done that.

Mr. R. Brown: – and I know they will get this project done.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale and Third Party House Leader.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier this fall, our office heard from a young Islander concerned about his family's ability to qualify for the Down Payment Assistance Program.

Although the young man and his wife have a gross household income that is marginally above the program's income threshold, their take-home income is much less, and that his before they factor in the high cost of rent and childcare for their two children.

Unfortunately, this family would not qualify for the program, even though they determined is would substantially lower their monthly housing costs.

Down Payment Assistance Program accessibility

A question to the Minister of Finance: What is your government doing to make the program more accessible to middle-class Islanders who are struggling to get by?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think the initiative of that program was well thought out.

On the day I announced it at the Credit Union, along with mortgage companies and financial situations that were there on that day, we talked about reevaluating that program. But I do want to ask the hon. member to ensure that those people have applied for free child care if so be it. Because there may be an option there for them to obtain free child care, based on what you are saying.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In provinces like Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia, governments have introduced down payment assistance programs with different assistance amounts for different geographical areas; recognizing that housing in urban areas is typically more expensive than rural.

Geographical components to down payment program

Question to the Minister of Finance: Why did the PEI government forgo this measure?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Like I said before and I said it today, I said it in the media publically – I said: If we are going to review this program as we move forward, we set out a fund of \$2 million.

We've had many people – actually I think there are over 20 people now that have registered or are inquiring about this program. We have had some successes already. We are willing to work with anyone that comes forward; we had some special circumstances and those people approached us. I wish the hon. member would forward me the name, or at least have them reach out to me.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I should qualify that this family have reached out and applied and have been denied –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Ms. Bell: – along with their down payment assistance program, Newfoundland and Labrador introduced a program to support residents who wanted to build their own home.

Assistance programs for building own homes

Why did our government decide against doing a similar program?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Again, this program, we think it's working very well. I have already stated publically that if there are changes required to this program to advance this program, then we are willing to sit down and look at that. We've only been in the program for approximately a month and a half to two months and we will continue.

But, we feel it is extremely important to give first-time home buyers an opportunity. Not everybody has the option to have a loan from a parent or from a relative, so I think this initiative is extremely important and the atmosphere we are in right now in the housing issues, I think this government is doing the right thing by assisting those that want to own a home, because we know how important homes are to people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Question from the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As an MLA for Tignish-Palmer Road, I represent a large number of members of the Acadian community; that's a fact that I am very proud of. As an elected official, I recognize and respect the importance of Acadian Islanders and believe that we must respect and support Acadian and the Francophone community. An important element of this is providing government services in French.

Bilingual positions at Access PEI

Can the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, who is responsible for Access PEI and from this House why bilingual position in Tignish has been moved to Alberton?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Access PEI offices are in strategic locations across our province to provide Islanders

easy and efficient access to services they need. In Western Prince, there are four locations – Alberton, O’Leary, Tignish, and Wellington. We work diligently to ensure that we have appropriate staff and appropriate locations to ensure operations run smoothly.

The Alberton location is centrally located for West Prince. The bilingual position in Alberton makes French services more accessible for Acadian and Francophone’s in the area as a whole.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am disappointed with that decision.

Tignish is an Acadian community since it was founded in 1799. However, I’m going to move on.

As elected officials, the greatest privilege we have to serve Islanders, and we must do so in a respectful and positive manner. The department of transportation must communicate important public safety information.

Access to translation services for government departments

Can the minister tell the House whether she has access to translation services, and what her department is doing to ensure that our Island, Acadian and Francophone community is able to access services in French?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Translation services are available to all of our government departments. We have a highly qualified and efficient team. All government institutions also have French language services coordinator that works with senior staff and deputy ministers to do the planning of programs and services.

There are currently nine designated services, and one of the most recent ones is within my department at Access PEI –

Mr. Myers: Obviously.

Ms. Biggar: – in Wellington. All services offered at that location are available in both French and English.

Premier MacLauchlan: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know in my constituency, I have heard from some people who are upset with the response from an email that minister recently received in her position as minister responsible for infrastructure. After realizing her mistake, I saw that the minister posted an apology and I believe she was sincere with that apology. However, I believe that a more formal is warranted.

Mr. LaVie: There’s pavement going.

Transportation minister apology to French community

Mr. Perry: Will the minister apologize again today, formally on the floor of this Chamber?

Thank you.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And yes, I did apologize for my hasty response. My family has ties as well to the Acadian community, and it is undeniable that the Acadian and Francophone communities across our province continue and have played an important role in the fabric of our Island culture.

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: I want to extend my apology to Ms. Gallant, and the Francophone community for my hasty response. I offer for the opportunity to meet with her or representatives of the Francophone community.

Again, I say I am sorry, *Je m'excuse*.

Speaker: Thank you, minister.

Next question, the hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to start by thanking the Member from Borden-Kinkora for a great segue into my questions today for the Premier.

The dairy industry, as everyone knows and we have talked about it lots of times in this House, the value of the dairy industry and all our supply management commodities to this province and to the culture of the Island as well.

We've got 165 dairy farmers which is a lot more people than 165 involved in this industry to produce what is considered as the most perfect food, well as close to perfect food available.

We have the ADL plant there in Summerside as well that employs over 250 people. Just an awesome benefit for our whole industry for the provincial economy.

It's a very serious issue after we signed the CETA agreement, the TPP agreement now the USMCA agreement

Dairy industry on PEI

I want to ask the Premier if he's fully aware of what this means to the whole province and to our dairy industry.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank the hon. member for the question.

Dairy industry, as has been indicated in earlier comments today, is a very big part of our communities throughout the province of

our economy, farm gate on the order of \$80 million annually, another 120 or upwards of that in the processing. So, a very big economic impact with the access that has been factored in to the USMCA this undoubtedly has raised concerns for the producers and for the dairy community and it's something that we're well aware of.

It's something that we respect those concerns and the challenges that the dairy sector faces. It was a difficult, if I may, it was a difficult negotiation. The Americans have organized mismanagement or organized, subsidized overproduction and Canada has a very good system and it's one that we did our best, I believe the federal government did its best to protect, but there's a challenge in this.

Speaker: Member from Vernon River-Stratford, your first supplementary.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The premier is right, if you talk to dairy farmers around the world, they would love to have the supply managed commodity system that we have here.

Talked to people in the US, it's the same thing.

Meeting with dairy processors and producers

It was a tough negotiation, but in the end between the CETA, the TTP and the USMCA, we lost about 10% of our production to the world market. I know we're a trading nation that's good, I'm just wondering if the Premier has actually met with the processors and producers of this province.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, at their request about having to respond, the representatives of the dairy farmers of PEI met with Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and myself and it was a very good full discussion –

Mr. Myers: I hear a dairy farmer's going to run against you.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and to hear their concerns, we've had regular meetings and indeed investments in significant investments in capital projects on the processing side. We had ADL this evening –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – but the thing that is very clear from the farmers is that they've been productive, they've been investing and they've been under a lot of stress from a decline in their per litre price in any case, so I think Islanders need to support our dairy sector, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford, your second supplementary.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to raise something I never thought I would when I was dairy farming myself when I was 30 years and that's a piece on compensation.

We took great pride when we were in the dairy industry, and when we were in all the supply manage commodities, be it chicken, turkey or poultry – the laying hens or the dairy that we didn't want compensation.

We were in an industry that the farmers ran the industry themselves, we weren't looking for compensation, we wanted to get our dollars back from the marketplace from the consumer directly and it worked very very well.

There was a compensation package offered to offset the loss of production that was taken out of our hands.

Compensation package re: dairy farmers

I know the premiers are meeting I think in Montreal on December 6th. I'm wondering if the Premier could take the concerns with regards to the compensation package, have it delivered ASAP and let's get back to growing our industry and ensuring that the dairy industry and the other supply managed commodities are the best run organizations in the province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I take that suggestion well and indeed we've had discussions already with the federal government, notably with the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada with a view to the Prince Edward Island sector, Prince Edward Island farmers and processors being there first when these programs are unveiled. We're very keen to do that and we've been working together though the ministry of agriculture and agriculture foods, through economic development and tourism and indeed at the level of intergovernmental affairs. Indeed, we will look for every opportunity December 6th and before that when we can advance that cause and work together with our Prince Edward Island sector to ensure that they continue to prosper because they're some of the most industrious and hard working people we have on our province.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over the last year, we've seen an increase in the number of violent home invasions happening on Prince Edward Island.

One of more recent incidents, two teenage girls hid upstairs in their home in the City of Summerside while an armed assailant broke in during the middle of the day – broad daylight.

Violent crimes and home invasions in PEI

Question to the Attorney General: What steps is your government taking in response to the growing number and growing problem of violent home invasions within this province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

This is an issue that is complex, as I've mentioned before in this house. We do have the number one justice system in the country, we do have the highest level of

confidence in our policing and in our safety and we do have the lowest level of these complex crimes in our province but that's not to say that we can't always do better.

It's also not to say that as we see threats such as outlaw motorcycle gangs and increased incidences of drugs coming to our Island, that we can't do more and we are working with our policing partners to do more.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to say something. I remember about a year and a half ago the Premier made an announcement that he was going to get tough on organized crime and motorcycle gangs in this province at a conference over there.

From my understanding, nothings been done yet. These home invasions have happened in communities all across the Island.

Earlier this year at a sentencing for a case in Borden-Carleton, the presiding judge noted that far too many drug-related home invasions happening on PEI, and particularly, in Prince County.

Drugs and violent crimes in PEI

Question to the Attorney General: Do you agree with the judge's observation that drugs are fuelling the increased trend in violent crimes across this province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

There's a couple of things I want to pick up on in that question.

I would say one home invasion is too many on Prince Edward Island. As I indicated, we are fortunate enough that we do have fewer here than most other provinces in Canada – (Indistinct) in fact, every other province in Canada would.

Mr. Myers: Tell someone who's had one.

Mr. J. Brown: But we are working on this issue, we are also fortunate not to have had a great incidence of an influx of drugs yet on Prince Edward Island but we are always vigilant –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – we are working on combating outlaw motorcycle gangs, the legalization of marijuana –

Mr. Myers: You can't be serious.

Mr. J. Brown: – we are hopeful will reduce the incidence of illegal sources –

Mr. Myers: Do you leave your house at night?

Mr. J. Brown: – of distribution of marijuana –

Mr. Myers: See the zombies walking around here?

Mr. J. Brown: – in the province and that hopefully will also have an impact.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Many have pointed to the increased availability of drugs like methamphetamine as contributing to the rise in violent crime.

Violent crimes and home invasions in PEI (further)

Question to the Attorney General: what discussions have you had with the RCMP and local law enforcement agencies about this disturbing trend of violent crimes and home invasions?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

Off the top of my head, I believe I've met with the policing partners that would come to bear on drugs and outlaw motorcycle gangs in this province, on at least two

official occasions to talk about this issue and in a larger way I think on five occasions in the last year.

Mr. Myers: You know the drug dealers; you used to represent them –

Mr. J. Brown: It is an issue for sure; we have had great success as an example with our methadone program. I believe the last number I heard was over 600 people enrolled in it and it has reduced significantly.

I can tell you in my district, the amount of petty theft, the amount of home invasions all those –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – different things, we're working everyday to keep Islanders safe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've heard previously at legislative committees, from the local law enforcement, concerned about the rise in use of drugs like methamphetamine could eventually contribute to the rise in violent crimes. This is also – we now have the legalization of marijuana so there's the threat of people going to more serious drugs.

Assistance from law enforcement

Has government received any requests from the law enforcement community or public safety to help in this challenge?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

Yes, as I've indicated, we have met with our policing partners who, by the way, we are very proud of here on Prince Edward Island. We have, as I've indicated, the best justice system in the country. We have the most confidence in our police system in the country – in the country, and this member should be well aware of that.

We certainly work with them hand in hand as part of the policing review and on a day-in-day-out basis to ensure the best safety for Prince Edward Islanders. That's not to say we don't have issues, and that's in fact why we do have great officers like Officer Fields who is here today. We will do our best to ensure that we work hand in hand with our policing partners to ensure Prince Edward Islanders' safety.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, this government reduced funding to the RCMP which caused them to have to cut the highway traffic unit that was on the highway that they've been asking to get back.

With the legalization of cannabis, a revenue stream for criminal groups has been reduced.

Illicit drug trades and cannabis legalization

Question to the Attorney General: Does government feel that criminal organizations are moving into other illicit drug trades to offset the revenue losses from the cannabis legalization?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

The first thing I'd like to say is that we have not cut any policing agency on Prince Edward Island. Let's just get that right out and on the table.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Yes you did.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) facts straight.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: The second thing – and I will say: No.

In fact, we have increased payments to policing agencies, but this is a common theme here. The opposition is not worried at all about facts –

Mr. LaVie: Fake news. Fake facts.

Mr. J. Brown: – and I will say that I've not heard that drug dealers are moving into other drugs –

Mr. LaVie: You've got to get out of your office.

Mr. J. Brown: – but I hope they are struggling because that's a sign that the plan is working, that we're taking away those illicit forms of drug dealing and hopefully they'll move right out of our community and right off of Prince Edward Island.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Get your facts straight.

Mr. LaVie: You'll hear the facts.

Get out of your offices over there and talk to the frontline workers.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: I'm serious on this one (Indistinct) RCMP.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, your final question.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If you guys hadn't of cut funding to the RCMP in some of their units, then we as MLAs wouldn't be receiving phone calls from municipalities saying they never see a police car in rural PEI.

Can you imagine being one of those two girls home in the safety of their house and all of a sudden, somebody breaks in and they have to go hide, fearing for their life in their own personal space?

A home invasion is a violation of that person's personal space and safety. What's disturbing about this trend is the physical and sexual violence that puts individuals at even more risk. It's only by good fortune

that somebody was not hurt and possible killed.

Supports for victims of violent crimes

Question to the Attorney General: What resources and supports are available for people who have been victims of these traumatic, violent crimes in Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

This is a great question. There are a number of different things in there. We had an announcement here, I believe, in the last week about the rape and sexual assault centre that hits directly on the question that the member asked.

We have had a great increase in our alcohol and addictions programming, both in-patient and out-patient in this province. We have done work at the youth centre, and overall we have focused on Prince Edward Islanders. We are focusing on doing our best, whether it be through mental health and building up our capacity there, whether it be through student well-being teams in our schools and starting to get at disaffected youth in the school system before they turn down a wrong path, whether it be having police officers and youth service workers in schools where they can get to the root of the problems.

We are doing what we can do –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: You won't put them up in Souris.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) failure.

Mr. J. Brown: – in this province and we will continue to do more in this province.

But I will call on the opposition to stop trying to spread fear. We have the lowest crime severity index in this province –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – and all of Canada and we will continue to try and make that lower, but we have to –

Mr. Myers: Leave Brighton for a day.

Mr. J. Brown: – work together to do it, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: Leave Brighton, even for the afternoon.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) frontline workers
(Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) up and down the street on your street. Don't see one on mine.

Leader of the Opposition: We don't even have enough police to catch you speeding in Stratford.

Mr. Myers: On his way to Birchwood in his rocket-powered car.

[End of Question Period]