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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

FRIDAY, 30 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, up to 58,000 customers of Maritime Electric and Summerside Electric woke up to no power due to the most recent winter storm. In fact, thousands are still without power this morning, despite the valiant efforts of power crews who worked throughout the night.

Restoration of power to Islanders

Question to the Premier: Premier, what is the latest update that you can share on when utilities may have power fully restored to Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We heard the public communications from Maritime Electric and the number of subscribers or the number of customers without power dropped quite dramatically between 6:00 a.m. this morning and 9:00 a.m.

We're aware that Maritime Electric is bringing in supplemental crews from Ontario and New Brunswick. There will be a further dedicated effort. We met some of the workers this morning.

I'm told that it could be in some rare cases, on into the weekend or even early next week for certain customers, but in the main the power is on, or coming on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Power disruptions in southeastern New Brunswick forced the province to depend on

locally generated power through backup generator capacity.

Cost of producing backup power locally

Question to the Premier: Do you have any initial estimates on how it much may have cost our utilities to produce this backup power locally?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: The first question wasn't the out of pocket cost, but the fact that Maritime Electric does indeed have a system, a policy to respond – contingency plans – in a situation like this.

Yesterday, we had the double challenge. One, that the lines at Memramcook, New Brunswick, which is the main area, the main point in the system for transmitting power through to Prince Edward Island, fortunately we've got those extra cables. But the second piece was that yesterday, because of the high winds, we were not able to use our own windmills to generate on-Island power.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Well, events like these cause many of us to step back and reevaluate things. So I'd like to ask a bigger picture question.

Security of energy grid on PEI

Question to the Premier: How secure is our energy grid here on PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me start by saying that because of the good choices that Prince Edward Islanders are making to switch to electricity and away from other sources of energy – a commitment to a cleaner and a greener Prince Edward Island and to deal with climate change, we have – since 2015 – seen an increase in the peak demand, or the demand that you have to provide for, at the

peak of approximately 15% in terms of electricity demand.

Indeed, that does lead to questions of how an on Island sense and then in a regional sense we can make provision for an increasingly electrified future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Mr. Speaker, last summer was one of the hottest summers we had on PEI with record and major heat waves with high humidity.

Air conditioner in Premier's office

Question to the Premier: You installed an air conditioner in your office last summer; can you explain to me how much that air conditioner cost?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: An air conditioner was offered, and I declined.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: Get your facts straight.

Mr. LaVie: At one point, the humidex was above 30 degrees. Would you be surprised at this air conditioner installed in your office was \$73,000.

Mr. Myers: No. Really?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I'm not sure what the hon. member is referring to.

There was some extensive work done on the roof of the Shaw Building to deal with the system for the entire building. I certainly heard the work being done, and there was some disruption during that time.

I was not aware – maybe the minister of public works could tell us more about that. It wouldn't in a normal course be something that would come across the Premier's desk, but I repeat what I said in response to the previous question. I want to be clear about this. There was an air conditioning unit offered for my office, and I declined because I think Prince Edward Islanders should – when they can – find ways to get some fresh air and not be putting up our energy consumption of getting too accustomed to cooling in the summertime.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

According to the project invoices, freedom of information, it cost more than \$73,000 to install an air conditioner at your office.

Tabling of invoices

Question to the Premier: Will you table all those documents?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Pretty bad if you have to be saved by her.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy are responsible for the public buildings right across government, part of that project was to refurbish the air system in that particular complex.

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: I'll go back and get the information, and be happy to table it here.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This summer, there was a problem at the Wedgewood Manor with air conditioning.

Half the manor had no AC. The elderly patients were living in intensive heat, and this Premier installs a \$73,000 air conditioning at his office.

Seniors homes and AC

Why was there a budget for an AC, but none for the seniors that I've named?

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member is correct. This past summer we've reached record highs on many of the days over the summer months. This did cause some problems in some of our community care facilities, our long-term care facilities, and even in our hospitals in some cases.

Obviously these temperatures are not normal

—

Mr. Fox: Do you live here, minister?

Mr. Mitchell: — and they weren't all prepared for it earlier.

But in the case of Wedgewood Manor, we worked closely with the staff; we worked closely with transportation, infrastructure renewal and were able to come up with some used air conditioners that we were able to rush right out and get them installed to make it comfortable for, not only for the residents, but for the staff, because we want staff to be in comfortable areas working too.

We reached out — there was no air conditioners — new air conditioners — to be had anywhere in the Maritimes, and the minister of transportation found some used ones that we were able to put forward and to keep the area cool for those residents.

Some Hon. Members: Good job. Nice.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These air conditioners were installed in evenings and weekends at an overtime rate of \$112 an hour.

Air conditioner in Premier's office (further)

Why were you in such a rush to have air conditioning put in your office, Premier?

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, as I noted to the members over there, they don't seem to know what the procurement process is within government. I shudder to think what would ever happen if they ever, ever have the opportunity to get into government because they don't know anything about procurement.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Any work that's done, we tender out the work. We have work that we have to do to keep our complexes up.

I can tell you, I've been in the Premier's office and he does not have an air conditioner.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: We'll answer in French, yes we will.

Mr. Roach: All the civil servants (Indistinct)

Speaker: Okay, members. It's fairly cool out, let's just keep it cool.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I do know that people have no work, no money for Christmas. I do know our food banks are up right across PEI. I do know that seniors had no power last night.

Don't worry about us on this side, worry about the people outside.

To the Premier: Do you think it's fair to seniors in manors to have them sweat out the heat all summer while you installed an air conditioner at your office?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a result of record-high temperatures last summer we are looking at determining – to be preemptive this summer and to ensure that residence will have areas that are well cooled, and the new manors, they use a different method there that takes the moisture out of the air.

Often our seniors, they like the heat anyway but it's the staff that this will take the moisture out. We'll look at other measures on those types of things moving forward to ensure that our residents' cares are being well met.

It was very fortunate last summer that the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy was able to come up with some refurbished units that we were able to install quickly; ran them up in the morning and they were working by lunchtime to ease those pressures in that facility.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well here's a government that's thinking about themselves not about the people of PEI, like they always talk about, people of PEI.

You install an air conditioner in your own office, that's thinking about yourself.

They talk about a budget surplus, what do they do? Install an air conditioner –

Mr. Myers: Premier's office.

Mr. LaVie: They don't fix the leaky roofs in senior's homes; they don't install a furnace where they'll have heat.

Mr. Myers: Grew up with a silver spoon in his mouth.

Mr. LaVie: I hear these stories daily.

Seniors homes and AC (further)

Question to the Premier: Doesn't jumping the line for AC over seniors in our manors reek of entitlement?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, again, as I noted it's my responsibility as the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy to oversee the whole complex, the government buildings and I didn't see the Leader of the Opposition or opposition members refuse air conditioning in their offices on second floor here.

Some Hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) \$73,000 (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: It's my responsibility to ensure if there are repairs that need to be done to government buildings that we ensure that it is done.

As a government, we are making sure that seniors are looked after; we just built a brand new \$8 million manor in Tyne Valley which has a state of the art facility and we'll continue to make sure that seniors are looked after.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll let the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy know I never spent one day this summer in my office in Charlottetown –

[Laughter]

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: I spend my time in District 1 –

Ms. Biggar: Wow.

Mr. LaVie: – with my people. That's where I spend my time.

Mr. Myers: That's it right there, you should try it sometime. You should try it sometime; go out from Charlottetown some night.

Mr. LaVie: Mr. Speaker, \$73,000 would have bought a lot of heat pumps for affordable housing.

Premier claims of climate leading

Question to the Premier: \$73,000 would have bought a lot of heat pumps for affordable housing. Is this what you mean when you call yourself a climate leader?

Mr. Myers: Good question. Good question. Climate leader indeed.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we introduced through Efficiency PEI last spring a program of rebates to encourage and support Prince Edward Islanders in the acquisition of heat pumps. At last count, there were upwards of 4,200, it's likely higher now.

Islanders who stepped forward, who've been very busy and contractors have been busy and the people have been getting the rebates, they've been using less oil and they've been enjoying the comfort of heat pumps.

I was, I guess, surprised to hear that the member didn't come to town last summer but it's also my understanding that there's air conditioning at the access facilities in Souris.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: That's where your office is.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Prince Edward Island has made great strides in renewable energy over the last 20 years, most notably in wind energy. However, progress on the area of solar power has lagged behind.

Solar power incentives

Question to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: What incentives

currently exist to encourage the adoption of solar energy on Prince Edward Island?

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

Ms. Biggar: As I've mentioned here several times since the House opened, the incentives that we are offering to Islanders is helping them switch away –

Mr. Trivers: Solar energy.

Mr. R. Brown: – from oil, towards heat pumps.

We are offering incentives for people to insulate their homes, to convert from different sources of electricity and use wood, use propane. We are continuing to work on initiatives that we can expand as we go forward.

We're working with businesses so they can convert to other sources of energy and we are continuing to work on different initiatives that will provide Islanders options.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was a simple question. It was about incentives for solar. I didn't hear anything about solar in that response.

A new study from the national energy board suggests that solar energy is an underdeveloped opportunity for Prince Edward Island to lower energy costs and carbon emissions. Prince Edward Island has some of the highest electricity costs in the country and as they say in the report –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) pipeline.

Mr. Trivers: – I quote: the reason that Prince Edward Island is right for solar development is that it depends more on local electricity prices, rather than the amount of sunlight received.

Question to the energy minister: Are there any tax incentives or rebates in place for Island home owners and businesses who

have developed or want to use solar to develop net-zero buildings?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, we do have lots of incentives and one of them, in particular, is benefitting Islanders by \$10 million dollars by giving a rebate on the tax towards their electricity.

They get that on their bill –

Mr. R. Brown: Good point, good point.

Ms. Biggar: – month. We're continuing to invest in efficiency programs, in heat pumps and conversion to other sources of energy.

We are working with Islanders, we're working with low-income families, and we will continue to work with them to save them money every day in their pockets.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Got them on the ropes, you got them on the ropes; you got them on the ropes.

Mr. MacEwen: Keep flipping.

Mr. LaVie: Yeah but you never said what you're taking out of the other pocket though.

Mr. Myers: Next page, it's in the next page I'm sure it is.

Ms. Compton: Keep flipping, it's there.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Taking the provincial portion of the PST off of electricity is a great initiative; it was something we campaigned on in the last election.

Thank you for doing that, implementing our policy.

Mr. Myers: Thanks for listening.

Mr. Trivers: But, those Islanders who've taken the initiative to install PV solar panels still pay tax on the energy that they produce and they use.

An Hon. Member: No.

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: The report I'm talking about, called The Economics of Solar Power in Canada said this about our province: Currently, residential solar break evens are less than residential electricity prices in most places in Prince Edward Island.

Question to the minister responsible for energy: Why aren't we doing more to encourage Islanders to take advantage of this opportunity?

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, I applaud those that are doing a lot in solar conversion, they are using the grid, and they still use the grid when they need it but it's great that they can go to net zero when they don't need that extra opportunity.

There's a cost to maintaining that grid so that when they need it, they can switch to it but we are continuing to work with Islanders to convert to heat pumps, to convert to different sources of energy, to put money back in their pockets and to give them incentives to green their energy consumption.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The National Energy Board's report came to a similar conclusion about commercial and community solar break even points right here on Prince Edward Island.

They said and I quote: This means that businesses in most places here on Prince Edward Island – they could expect to save money by installing solar.

Incentivizing local renewable energy

Question to the energy minister: why is government ignoring a chance for Island homeowners, businesses, and communities to save money by incentivizing more local, renewable energy?

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker.

As a government we are partnering with communities who are developing solar systems. Down in Montague, there's a new system being put in place. I applaud that and –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – the initiative their doing. I applaud the City of Summerside, their heating at Credit Union Place –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – with their solar system.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: I also want to applaud the community of Tignish for their initiative –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – on a district heating system using biomass.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Solar. We're talking about solar.

Ms. Biggar: These are all initiatives –

An Hon. Member: Solar.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – that are renewable. You're talking about renewable – I'm talking about renewable.

Mr. Myers: Solar.

Some Hon. Members: Solar, Solar!

Ms. Biggar: And biomass is a renewable heating product.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Solar. Solar.

Mr. R. Brown: Chips are solar.

Leader of the Opposition: Might want to get some air conditioning on that side of the room; you're getting a little hot.

Mr. Myers: So, is the boot polish (Indistinct) put in your hair (Indistinct).

Speaker: Okay, hon. members. I think we're going to have a question from the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

So tempted to carry on that line of questioning, but I won't.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I was struck yesterday during debate on the gas tax amendments, how reluctant the Minister of Finance and the Premier were to tell this House that three quarters of the funds raised from the carbon tax are not going back into Islanders' pockets directly, as our plan would have done. But, they're going to be used to subsidize our continued use of fossil fuels.

I couldn't understand how a plan which should have been celebrated so much by this Premier, and the Minister of Finance, and everybody else on that side of the House, could make you feel so uncomfortable last night that you couldn't even talk about it openly.

Subsidizing of fuel costs

A question to the Premier: You have promoted the *Gas Tax Act* as a way to offset the costs of federally imposed carbon taxes, so why are you not enthusiastically telling Islanders how you are subsidizing their fuel costs?

Mr. Roach: We're not taking it out of their pockets in the first place.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes, you are.

Speaker: Hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker.

There's obviously a wide gap between the Third Party and our government when it comes to this very question. Leaving three cents in Islanders pockets – we do not consider that to be a subsidy, neither do we consider it to be a subsidy encouraging bad behaviour, which is exactly what the Green Party thinks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

All the line of questioning from the opposition today was regarding climate change, whether it was air conditioning in buildings, whether it was the stability of our grid, or whether it was the lack of incentives for solar powers – for solar power here on Prince Edward Island. We need to act on this, and we have two separate bills before this House to accomplish, apparently, government's plan to combat climate change: one to raise the cost of fossil fuels, and the other to reduce it back down again.

Debating of two bills

A question to the Premier: why are we debating two bills that are so clearly at cross purposes to each other?

Speaker: Hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, yesterday evening, I used the analogy and we had the lights on in here, fortunately, but I don't think the Leader of the Third Party had his hearing aid turned up. So I'll say it again –

Some Hon. Members: Oh.

Premier MacLauchlan: – I used the analogy of the high jump. In order execute a successful high jump, you have to have a decent run at it – it's something I've tried in my time – so what we're doing is lowering

the upsize tax on gasoline that's currently very high for Islanders.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Islanders currently pay 18% of their transportation costs, which is the highest among any other provinces in the country – so we're creating some space in order then to bring in the carbon levy and we'll have a chance to consider it now that the Leader of the Third Party has agreed that it's time to go to second reading.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Bill No. 62, the deliciously ironically titled *Climate Leadership Act*, clearly states in the principle of that bill that by raising the cost of fossil fuels, the expectation is that carbon emissions will be reduced – it says that in the purpose of the bill.

Carbon pricing and carbon emissions

A question to the Premier: Do you agree with the bill's principle, that carbon pricing and using market forces actually does reduce carbon emissions? And if so, why are you intentionally sabotaging your own plan?

Speaker: Hon. Premier.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I believe all members of this House, and I believe a lot of Prince Edward Islanders are aware, that in fact there will be a carbon levy. It will be an increment of one cent in 2019, and a further increment of one cent in 2020. We believe that price is a factor and we say so, and we said it in the submission that was tabled here last night. I encourage the Leader of the Third Party to take a good look at it.

We also believe that Islanders will make the right choices, they will respond when the technologies are appropriate, they will drive electric cars when electric cars are available. They have done this for decades, and that's why we were able to put forward such a

convincing case – a case that was accepted – that we have a carbon reduction plan; a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that will meet our targets and that Islanders are supporting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the past, I have advocated to the Minister of Health and Wellness for coverage of ostomy supplies, which he has delivered and I thank him very much for that. I've also asked for support for Islanders seeking in vitro fertilization, and I look forward to delivering on that pretty soon.

Today, I have another important issue affecting the health of Islanders, and I'm hopeful the minister will deliver on.

Islanders paying for EpiPens

Will the Minister of Health and Wellness inform the House why Islanders must pay out of pocket for EpiPens when they are life saving devices?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

The work we do every day at the Department of Health and Wellness is about saving lives and about keeping Islanders well. When it comes to coverage of EpiPens, as the hon. member asked, currently EpiPens are provided under several of our provincial programs. Our Financial Assistance Drug Program offers EpiPens to Islanders at no cost. As well, our Family Health Benefit Program, which is for low income families – I might add – it is a minimal fee, it just covers the dispensing fee, which at today's rate is at \$12.36, I believe. Our children in care program, it also covers those EpiPens at no cost, and as last, our Catastrophic Drug Program – if a family does fit into that program, those are no cost to them there as well.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

EpiPens are literally a life saving device. It's a parent's worst nightmare to have a sick child and not be able to help them.

Commitment of assistance for EpiPens

Something as simple as access to an EpiPen can make all the difference in the world. Will the minister of health commit to this House to developing a financial assistance plan for families with children who require EpiPens, by making them available for free?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) first responders.

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

Obviously, if we could make all medications or all health devices on Prince Edward Island free, we certainly would do that. We constantly work towards that, but there are financial aspects and pieces involved. I know my own son, my youngest son, he had a life-threatening allergy when he was young, so he always had to carry an EpiPen, so I'm very familiar with how these EpiPens work and how they're a part of – but as I said earlier, we do cover the cost of EpiPens under many of these programs.

But I might also add, many of our private plans – our health plans – will also provide coverage, which covers up to 80% of that drug. Leaving Islanders that have the coverage a 20% fee, which is still a number that is around \$25.00.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

EpiPens availability at public buildings

I support the initiative that was recently undertaken by government and by communities to provide more AEDs, which

is another life saving device; which is in public buildings, in addition to the registry, so that Islanders can see where their devices are located. Will the minister of health work with municipalities to help make EpiPens available at public buildings, like AEDs?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Currently not aware of any type of practice in any jurisdiction that would have EpiPens, similar to AEDs, available. These EpiPens, they are somewhat dependant on the individual that is taking them. For instance, if it's a child or an adult, there are different dosages when they are needed. So, having a prescribed medication of this type in a public area would come with risk involved.

But having said that, though, if there's some way that the risk could be mitigated or controlled, that's something that we should take a look at and we'd be very open to have a look at that. But, there would be a lot of process involved in there, but we'd start that process.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question this morning is to the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Minister, during the spring session and the spring session before that, and possibly the spring session before that, I asked questions to various health ministers regarding midwifery.

Minister, the *Registered Health Professions Act* came in effect on October 13th, 2018, and during my questions in the spring I asked you about the appointment of a registrar.

Registrar position

Can you update the House on the registrar position?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And yes, that act did proceed through the House earlier this year and since that time, a registrar and a deputy registrar had to be assigned to the act and late in the summertime we did do the selection for those two positions.

Kevin Barnes and Corinne Rowswell – Corinne will be the deputy registrar and they are both staff and are employees of the Department of Health and Wellness because this act will be administered through the department for all of those professionals that come under the umbrella.

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

Status of midwives application

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, what is the status of the association of midwives application and how long from the time their application is approved until we see a midwife practicing on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I know that the application from the midwives' representative is forthcoming and I expect to see it in the very near future.

Discussions have been ongoing with them as well, but I think it's important to note that there are quite a number of health professions or entities that will come under this act and many of them have already applied, and they're being worked on. There will be some months involved before midwifery will be practiced in PEI, but they will be in the queue.

As part of that, as well, there will be many policies and processes that need to come into play with other health professionals that exist in PEI. There is some work that's needed to be done, but we look forward to receiving the application from the representative for midwifery in PEI.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, as you're aware, I announced that I will not be reoffering after this mandate and is there anything else that I can be doing before my departure to assist the midwives association to finally have midwives practicing on PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

It would be no secret to any member of the floor of this Legislature that this member has been a tireless advocate for midwifery in Prince Edward Island, as well as autism.

I think you can rest assured, hon. member, that you have done the yeoman's service on both of those files and when you leave this Legislature, I think you can be very proud of the work you had done there and I think you will be very happy that in the coming months that you will see those that you have been involved with (Indistinct) midwifery be very happy with the work that you have done, hon. member.

Ms. Casey: Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The province and their \$50 million e-gaming lawsuit continues to wind its way through the courts.

Legal fees in e-gaming lawsuit

Question to the Attorney General: How much has the province spent on legal fees to-date defending your \$50 million lawsuit?

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

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

I don't have that figure in front of me.

As I suspect, many of the members in this Chamber would be aware the figure would be changing over the course of time.

We just recently have come through a motion where the defendants were successful and there would be an order of cost, I would suspect, that would go along with that. So, the figure would evolve over time as the litigation progresses and we can do our best to see what we can provide in terms of that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Oh no, we all know too well that whenever you have a lawyer on the clock that the bill just doesn't stop winding up and winding up, and I think that's why it's important.

A total of 14 people are being sued along with the province in this \$50 million e-gaming lawsuit. They include: current and former deputy ministers, civil servants, business people, lawyers, former premier chiefs of staff, and even a former premier himself.

Defendants having legal costs covered

Question to the minister: How many of these 14 defendants are having their legal costs covered by taxpayers' dollars?

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

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

I would have to actually get out and go through them and count them up. I don't have the number right off the top of my head.

But let me say this: I note that as a part of the requirement to proceed through the litigation, security for costs was required to be posted in relation to this matter and the litigation process will evolve over the course of time, but as it progresses, we would note

that when we have folks that are acting in their capacity as agents of the government, there is a duty to defend them. That's done through a risk management insurance fund that is carried, and it has very specific requirements and parameters in terms of who is insured and for what and what defence will be provided for them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If you listen to the minister talk about where this money comes from, it comes from this magic pot that no one put the money into, yet it's taxpayers' dollars. So, no matter where he's reaching over to grab the money to pay his lawyer friends, it's the taxpayers' money that's being used to pay it.

Province filing statement of claim

Question, again, to the minister: Has the province filed their response to the statement of claim in the courts yet?

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

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

As I've indicated previously, there are lawyers that are retained to deal with this matter. It's before the courts. It arises out of a complaint that is had by a private company. There has been extensive procedural litigation to-date and all of that is being handled by the insurer for the Government of Prince Edward Island, the risk management fund.

That's all being done according to procedures that have been set out and in place for decades in this province, and we're very happy to have them in place.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, the minister actually avoided answering my questions so the answer is no; that they haven't filed it in the court yet, which is very unusual for a defendant in a \$50 million lawsuit not to file their defence.

Question to the minister: Why hasn't the province filed their response yet to this lawsuit?

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

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

My father's father had a saying that; there's not much sense in keeping dogs if you're going to be doing all the barking.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: So, I'm not going to sit here in this Chamber and purport to be able to dictate the strategy that would be employed in terms of the defence of the claim that the hon. member is referring to.

But let me just say that this matter has involved a number of different procedural iterations. As I've indicated previously, there was a defence filed at one point in time in relation to the first claim that was filed. That claim was struck as a result of the defence that was originally filed. They came back again after an order to post nearly a million dollars in security for cost. There was another motion filed in relation to that, and on and on we go.

This is all a normal part of the litigation process and I suspect it will continue to move on.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess on the topic of dogs, we know who was acting was like the Lil Bow Wow on the third floor yesterday.

One of the most recent defences filed by the defendants disputed findings on the Auditor General report on the e-gaming scandal;

they completely dispute the – it's been completely disputed by one of the defendants.

Government endorsement of defence

Question to the Premier: Does your government endorse this defence?

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

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

I had heard that the hon. member was cursing and swearing at civil servants yesterday on the third floor.

But let me just say that as I indicated previously, government has an insurer, the risk management fund. The risk management fund directs the defence of any claim against government in relation to this matter.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: They have instructed legal counsel and will continue to provide them with instructions in relation to the defence of this matter.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: Wouldn't talk to anybody else like that.

An Hon. Member: Disgrace.

Speaker: Order!

Mr. J. Brown: We expect that they will do so in a professional manner.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, your final question.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) now.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Up on the third floor yesterday, the Attorney General spoke to people in very terse

language himself. He spoke over a female up there; acted like a complete and utter misogynist on our floor the entire day, every time he came up.

Funny that he would up throwing barbs like that, considering he knows how he acted and everyone saw it.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Compton: It was a disgrace.

Mr. Myers: He was a complete disgrace.

Mr. LaVie: Just listen now. Fire stones, you got to be (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: The Attorney General was actually the vice chair of the Public Accounts committee, when the Auditor General reported her findings in the e-gaming scandal.

Minister support of findings of AG or legal defence

Question to the minister: Do you support the findings of the Auditor General or do you support the last legal defence that your government filed in the e-gaming lawsuit?

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

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

I will reiterate again that we have a self-defence insurance fund that directs the defence of this matter on behalf of government and that they do so through defence counsel that they have hired and instructed independent of government.

I will say that we do recognize and have indicated an acceptance of the report of the Auditor General. She did a report in a very professional manner, and we took the time at public accounts to listen to the findings of that report. We put a lot of credence into them, and government has made changes as a result of them. We have accepted them, and we are moving.

That's the way that this is meant to work. I would suggest that the hon. member and the official opposition do the same and

recognize that that's how the process is meant to work.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]