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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

TUESDAY, 4 DECEMBER 2018

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: Questions will begin from the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Back in February of 2016, I submitted a written question asking for a breakdown of the number of Islanders on the patient registry.

Delay in responses to written questions

Question to the minister of health: Why did it take 29 months to get a response to that question from your department?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I don't recall the question, per say. So I'll check into that – why there was such a lapse in time.

I get regular updates on our patient registry on a monthly basis. I just happened to get that yesterday, so that we know where we stand on patient registry.

The number is hovering around the 11,000 mark and if you put that in the percentage perspective it's around 8% of Islanders that do not have a doctor – family physician. Conversely, 92% of Islanders do have a family doctor.

This number is concerning. We will work on recruitment efforts to bring physicians forth for all of those 11,000 Islanders.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The response I received in late July of this year contained two noteworthy pieces of information. First, the response said that as of March 2016 there were over 8,400 Islanders on the patient registry. Second, the

response began by saying: As of today, March 21st, 2016.

Info between Health PEI and Legislative Assembly

Question to the health minister: Does it normally take 29 months for information to travel from Health PEI to this House?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly that is a lengthy time period, and as I told the hon. member, I will check into that. But currently we do know there is about 11,000 Islanders that are on the registry waiting for a doctor.

I do encourage any Islanders that may be listening in today that do not have a family doctor and are not sure whether they're on the registry or not to definitely call forward to ensure that their name is there.

We will work with all Islanders that are on that list to try to provide a physician to provide that timely primary care need that all Islanders should and must have, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

As of March 21st, 2016, there were 8,408 Islanders on the patient registry according to the government numbers.

We know since then there have been doctor retirements and departures, and we know that up to 3,000 orphan patients in West Prince were advised by government to not even put their name on the patient registry.

Islanders on patient registry

Question to the health minister: You stand here today and say there's 11,000 Islanders not on patient registry, but yet we also know that your department told over 3,000 patients not to even put their name on the

registry. Minister, can you tell us what is the real answer?

Mr. LaVie: Shame.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Out of that 11,000, which I identified from an updated list I received yesterday, there are three physician vacancies at the moment. Two have panel sizes of 1,500 each for a total of 3,001 and the west end of PEI has a patient panel size of 800. So that's 3,800 out of that 11,000, so that brings it a little closer to the number that the hon. member speaks of.

We do know that this is a concern. We are working very closely with recruitment and retention to, not only recruit physicians, but to recruit NPs. We recently were able to add NP numbers to our list, and we were out recruiting.

Hopefully that through collaborative practice we will be able to pick up a lot of this panel size. I have had conversations with the Medical Society of PEI who were very supportive of looking at collaborative practice with nurse practitioners and physicians, and helping us with that panel size.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over the last year, South Shore residents have been working hard to fill the gap in the local health access created by this government when the area family doctor relocated their practice to fill another doctor vacancy in the province. Twenty-three hundred people lost their doctor.

Replacement doctor for South Shore

Question to the health minister: Can the minister give an update on efforts to recruit a replacement doctor for South Shore residents that have lost their family doctor last year?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member is correct. We've had a lot of good conversation with a community group out there that are out, I'll say, actively recruiting on their own for a family physician.

We've had meetings in my boardroom and in their boardroom at the rink facility out there. Excellent meetings, I must say, by a group of community individuals who are very focused on ensuring their primary care needs for that community are being well met.

We are looking at recruiting together. We are also, as I just alluded to, looking at adding new nurse practitioners to our complement on PEI. That's a potential something in the works for Crapaud and that area, which they were very receptive of if we could get that done.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Well, Mr. Speaker, this community has really come together and stepped up in response to the loss of the local –

Mr. Mitchell: – new nurse practitioners to our complement on PEI and that's a potential something in the works for Crapaud in that area, which they were very receptive of if we could get that done.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: This community has really come together and stepped up in response to the loss of the local doctor, affecting thousands of patients.

They put together a plan for a collaborative health clinic, including nurse practitioners; allied health services and yes, even a doctor.

Timeline for family doctor at South Shore

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Is there an estimated timeline to

when residents can see a family doctor working back in the community?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Those conversations have been ongoing and certainly we are working with the community group on recruitment efforts for a physician. They've had some opportunity within their own group based on physicians they know in other areas of Atlantic region that might have interest to come.

We've encouraged them to reach out to them and we'll support them through our recruitment and retention team.

We are working diligently to try to find a physician for that area; we've posted that position openly and are waiting for some responses back.

In the meantime, we will work with that community – if we get our nurse practitioners in place to see if that's a possible solution, at least in a short term until a physician is recruited.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The community went out and they raised the money to build the space for this plan. Currently, a walk-in clinic is open on a site in Crapaud with some nurse practitioner services available.

Increasing hours for nurse practitioner

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Is the province looking at increasing the hours of nurse practitioner coverage to help fill the gap of patients having no family doctor?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In conversations I've had with the committee, when we do identify the health

professional to come, that's when discussions of that nature would take place to determine what kind of hours would be there.

I've actually been in that clinic and I do know that they have a number of health allied professionals that come in there and run services out of that facility all through the week.

I applaud them for the work they've done to get health professionals to come in to do that and I'll work very closely with them in the future on ensuring their needs are met, either with a physician or a nurse practitioner.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The community's vision is to have a collaborative health clinic providing a range of integrated services for the thousands of orphaned patients all along the South Shore area.

Replacement doctor for South Shore (further)

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Do you agree that having a doctor practicing in the community as part of the team would compliment this model?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think it's any secret that I'm very supportive of collaborative practice, I've indicated that many times off the floor of the Legislature here, as well as in conversation with the medical society of PEI.

We have been working very closely on identifying that these patient registry sizes and individuals – Islanders all across PEI that do not have a health care provider is an important issue for our government and the med society will work with us on that.

Collaborative practices, I believe would be the way of the future on Prince Edward Island and I will work with any physician or

any nurse practitioner that wants to work on the collaborative practice.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've heard many concerns expressed locally about how the doctor vacancy is being promoted.

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: This is a clinic that is literally right on the county line, literally, of Prince Country and Queens County.

Advertising of area for doctor vacancy

Can the minister explain, why the doctor vacancy is only being advertised as part of the Queens West Primary Care Network, instead of the vacancy for Crapaud?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to physician recruitment, they are done in regions across our province. I don't as Minister of Health and Wellness dictate where our physicians are, we have committee's in place that determine that and I work with them to ensure that they are fulfilling the needs in areas.

When it comes to the Crapaud area, it does fit into the region which also includes Cornwall, so if we can recruit a doctor that's willing to Crapaud that would like to work in that Crapaud area, we will certainly support that.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The concern I've heard about this approach is that not including the community where the doctor would be working doesn't give them a clear picture.

I've also heard concerns that it gives government the flexibility to place new doctors out of smaller communities and into urban areas.

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: How does this approach help rural communities effectively recruit new doctors and health professionals?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I often get asked the question: whose job is it to recruit physicians to Prince Edward Island? Short answer is it's all of our work to go out and talk to physicians, recruit physicians.

When it comes to the area of Crapaud and when it comes to that committee that was struck a couple years ago, they are doing wonderful service.

I heard recently that as part of their recruitment efforts, they are indicating to physicians that are willing to come to that area that they will either provide a piece of land so they can build a home on, or they may even provide a home for that – this is how doctors get recruited to specific areas.

I applaud the committee for doing that and will work with them on that in the future.

Mr. R. Brown: Great job.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Between the English and French school boards, there are 62 schools in the province.

Solar panels in provincial schools

Question to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: How many of our provincial school have solar panels in place producing local, renewable energy?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do know there is one specifically that has solar panels on their roof; I applaud the Elliot River Elementary School and the community in Cornwall. I was out and

visited that school with the Minister of Finance.

The kids every day, they check what's happening with their solar energy and how much is being produced and I really think it's a great project that we have helped out with through efficiencyPEI.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Adding solar to biomass systems already in our schools would certainly cut down on the fuel bills.

Having solar arrays in place at our schools would also provide a great chance to inspire students and help them learn about renewable energy, science and technology.

School infrastructure review re: solar to power schools

Question to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: Will the upcoming school infrastructure review look at the potential to look at solar energy to help power our schools?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned with Elliot River Elementary, the students actually went out and raised money themselves to put the solar panels on and we were happy to partner in whatever way we could.

With all of our new facilities that we're building, it's always a consideration of the most efficient type of heating that we can put.

For instance, in the new manor in Tyne Valley instead of oil we have propane there heating the facility and we are always cognizant of what type of energy that we can provide that's going to be reliable, that's going to be the cheapest, that's going to be the best way that we can ensure that the energy being produced is clean.

Biomass is certainly a renewable energy that is a very clean source of heat.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If we're going to do a compressive review of school infrastructure, it only makes sense that we also look at whether there are opportunities to use solar energy to power our schools.

Question to the minister: Why wouldn't we be doing it?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, as I mentioned, we want to ensure that the heat that's being provided is consistent to the school and the requirements that is required there on a daily basis.

Our biomass infrastructure has proven to be a reliable source of energy.

We are looking at all forms of energy as we go forward with all of our new construction and we certainly will be looking at all areas where we can make sure that we save GHG's, we have clean energy, we're making sure that the source of heat is reliable and we'll continue to do that.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The former SCI fabrication yard in Borden Carleton continues to sit idle in government's hands. For years the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora has urged government to not let this strategic infrastructure asset go to waste.

SCI fabrication yard potential for solar farm

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

government done to look at this potential for a solar farm to be developed on this site?

Mr. Fox: Nothing.

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

Mr. Fox: Nothing.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We meet regularly with a lot of different companies –

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – who come to us with innovative ways of producing energy and we are always looking for those opportunities to look at what is out there in the market place.

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: We will certainly continue to work with companies that come into Prince Edward Island to increase opportunities for manufacturing and opportunities for energy, and we will continue to do that.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The industrial yard was previously used by SCI to build the pilings for The Confederation Bridge. Government bought this site in 2009, and little has happened since.

Mr. Fox: Nothing!

Solar panels for industrial property in Borden

Mr. MacKay: Question to the energy minister: Wouldn't solar panels generating megawatts of renewable energy be a better use of this property than sitting idle?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That yard in Borden is a strategic asset, and yesterday, actually, I spoke with the incoming mayor in Borden, and it wasn't a priority for us to look at things to develop in Borden. There are other places where they would like to spend their energy –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – and their effort to make improvements in Borden.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are 112 acres of south-facing land in this industrial setting. It also is one of the first things people see crossing the Confederation Bridge.

Question to the energy minister: Wouldn't a solar farm generating megawatts of renewable energy be an inspiring thing for visitors to see when they come over the bridge?

Mr. Fox: Yes!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we're talking about forms of energy, PEI is second in the world to our wind energy production here.

We already have –

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct) in solar.

Ms. Biggar: – we already have wind farms that are producing.

Mr. Fox: You haven't done nothing in solar.

Ms. Biggar: We announced today that we are starting environmental impact on looking at three different sites across –

Mr. Fox: Solar.

Ms. Biggar: – Prince Edward Island. For 2020 we will be installing 30 megawatts –

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Ms. Biggar: – and going forward –

Mr. Fox: Solar.

Ms. Biggar: – in 2023, there will be another 40 megawatts.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: We are always looking at ways that we can produce more energy for Islanders and we are opened to all forms of energy –

Mr. Fox: Solar!

Ms. Biggar: – and we're working on biomass, we are working on wind –

Mr. Fox: Solar!

Ms. Biggar: – we're working with other companies, and we will continue to do that.

Thank you.

Mr. Fox: Solar!

Mr. R. Brown: That's forward thinking.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, you just discussed about the three wind sites that are currently being looked at, and I've had numerous calls today coming from an article from CBC that a site in my district, out in Irishtown, was one of these potential sites out of the three.

Potential wind site in Irishtown

I'm wondering why I received 20 phone calls today, and there has been no public consultation done with any of my constituents down in Irishtown.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, we have had meeting out that area and this is part of a whole assessment process. Any part of the process will involve public meetings. What we're doing now is studying the wind data in those areas. As the project goes forward, any assessments will require public consultation, and we will continue to do that.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is typically, doing the work and then going to public meetings after, and asking for consultation –

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: – if you have had numerous consultations –

Mr. J. Brown: Do you want them or not?

Mr. MacKay: – from what I can hear, no one in Irishtown has known, and me, as the MLA, have not got a phone call to attend any of these meetings.

So, I'm curious as where these meetings were, and when they look place, minister?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I noted, we are doing wind data collection on those three sites –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – and I don't think the member over there wants anything good to come to his community.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: These wind farms benefit the communities. We lease the land from individuals, the money from those goes back into the community; we just need to talk about some of the other communities –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – that are benefiting from that. We are in the middle of starting an environmental process and we will continue to do that, and part of that will be public consultation.

Thank you.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On July 3rd, our office sent three FOIPP requests, one to each of the Executive Council, the department of justice, and the Premier's Office, requesting records around the drafting of the *Electoral System Referendum Act*, an act that was so bad it needed over 20 amendments during committee of the whole.

It has been over five months now, and all we've received are increasingly absurd excuses.

We were told the justice were told the justice records were sent to the deputy minister on October 24th, and that she then sent them back for further review, and that the Executive Council and Premier's Office records were sent for sign off a couple of weeks ago, but still no records.

Delay in release of information

A question to the Premier: How can you have confidence in our access to information system when government officials are clearly working together to delay the release of potentially damaging information?

Speaker: Hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker.

I'm sure the hon. Member is aware that I as Premier would not be involved, or even aware of those requests. But, let me say that we spent the better part of, what was it, a total of 11 weeks, in the House, dealing with this very matter last spring; a number of weeks of working together.

I think the part that stands out to my mind is that after all those weeks of working together to produce a fine piece of legislation, the Third Party voted against it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On August 9th, we sent a request for records on the hiring of Clifford Lee as special advisory on housing, and I have just been informed records won't be available until December 15th – a four month delay.

Delay in FOIPP requests

Again, to the Premier: Why do FOIPP requests take so long when they are on politically sensitive issues?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker.

As the hon. member may be aware, this is the first I have heard, actually, that a FOIPP request has been made in this matter. It sounds like you're about to get a – like the answer is about to be provided, so that will be coming imminently by the sounds of things.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: We've recently asked the commissioner to review a redaction from a FOIPP request for budget information on the Maybe You Should Come Home campaign.

We cannot understand how a budget figure could be advice to officials.

Budget information re: advice to government

Again to the Premier: Can you explain to me how a budget line – literally, information indicating tax dollars spent and who received it – could be considered advice to government?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, there is a reason under our legislation why the Premier is not involved in a) being aware of requests, and b) providing responses, or c) reviewing or offering further option on how officials have dealt with requests.

I do though, have access to Hansard. I was pleased to note that when the announcement was made of Clifford Lee's appointment, the Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale said, and it's on record that: I would like to extend congratulations on behalf of the Third Party – so, I take it you're speaking for your Leader, as well – to Clifford on his exemplary service in the last 30 years in municipal roles; (Indistinct) to recognize the work that Charlottetown has done being a leader in activities, et cetera.

So that's something I do have access to, and I'm sure that when the hon. member gets her answer on the appointment of Mr. Lee, she'll share in the sentiments regarding the merits of the appointment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Many times I have stood in this Legislature and called on the Premier to create an office of the child advocate, as has my colleague from Stratford-Kinlock.

Yet, each time it was mentioned, the Premier informed the House that he was confident that Prince Edward Island does not need a child advocate. This is in spite of the recommendations of the Campbell-Hennessey inquest jury, the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, both opposition parties, and the collective

wisdom of every other province in Canada – with the exception now, of course, of Doug Ford's Ontario.

Yet, as my questions concerning oversight of private schools earlier this sitting have shown, the Department of Family and Human Services, education and justice, actually have very limited capacity to step out of their mandates and advocate independently for children.

Independent oversight body for protection of children

A question to the Premier: When will you finally relent and give children of Prince Edward Island the protections that can only be provided by an independent oversight body?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, since we've come to government we've created a bridge program; a very effective collaborative – we keep hearing across the floor about collaboration – collaborative body of community, of various departments of government, of public service leadership working weekly, working together to deal with the interests of children, to identify systemic issues, to deal with tough cases.

That is only one of many steps and investments that this government has taken, to not only look after, but to promote and to ensure that the children in our province do well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Previously, the Premier has said and I quote: First things first – when asked about a child advocate. Yet, here we are in a uniquely-blessed situation with a \$75 million surprise surplus and a government apparently not unafraid to spend taxpayers' dollars. Surely some of that money the province could invest in a child advocate.

Introduction of a child advocate

Again to the Premier: Wouldn't this be the perfect time to bring forward a child advocate?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, at no point has it been said by government that our approach to dealing in a comprehensive way and in a collaborative way, in a caring way, and in a prioritized way, with the interest, and in particular, the interest of vulnerable children in this province, has anything to do with fiscal considerations.

If you look at the work that has been done to create a Children's Lawyer, and indeed it's been on the floor again in this sitting to expand the power of the Children's Lawyer, and reference made there to the workload and the response and the great work that's being done there; with the supervised access sites; with the alternative dispute resolution, with a number of other measures that we've taken.

This government has made it a priority, has devoted resources, and is dealing with the interests of the children, and in particular, with vulnerable children of this province, as a matter of high priority.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Well actually, the government tabled a document which suggested that the cost of a child advocate office would be more than the combined cost of the Auditor General's office, the conflict of interest office and a number of others; more than the combined cost of them.

So actually, you have put forward an argument that this is an economic barrier.

Cost to establish an office of a child advocate

Once again to the Premier: Is your refusal to establish an office of the child advocate here on Prince Edward Island the result of fiscal constraint, or your continued aversion to independent oversight?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, what I have just said in response to the previous question and have said on many occasions, is that we believe that the public servants who have the jobs – the jobs, plural – and who are making the collaborative effort to protect the interests, to serve the interests, to be dealing with the tough cases, to be dealing with systemic issues that affect children and that affect vulnerable children in our province, are doing a great job, have got the resources and indeed, when you look at what's been done over a period now approaching four years, this has been a priority. And, the work is getting done, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Family and Human Services.

Minister, I have been pleased over the years with the development that's taking place in Charlottetown-Lewis Point. Now, Charlottetown-Lewis Point is predominantly a residential area, but with the electoral boundaries changes we will welcome a large retail area.

I think one of my most proudest moments has been the development and the redevelopment of Charlotte Court, a subsidized seniors housing. Charlotte Court was actually the first seniors housing unit built on Prince Edward Island, and that has opened in the last few years.

Also in Charlottetown-Lewis Point, the Prince Edward Home; the new Prince Edward Home has a beautiful location out there and –

Mr. LaVie: Is this a motion, Mr. Speaker? Is this a motion?

Ms. Casey: – efficiency PEI is there, and the new cannabis store.

Minister, I noticed that in the capital budget 20 transitional housing units for the –

Mr. LaVie: Question.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct) question.

Ms. Casey: – Beach Grove Road area in Charlottetown-Lewis Point are being proposed.

An Hon. Member: Question.

Purpose of transitional housing

Ms. Casey: Could you explain what these units are for and what needs will be addressed?

Mr. R. Brown: Great question.

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

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct) only took 20 minutes to get there.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, hon. member, the Department of Family and Human Services are indeed building 20 homes to support survivors of family violence, including individuals and children who are aging out of the child protection system's care.

These homes will offer a safe place for them to stay, as well as supportive services for clients that are transitioning back into their communities and to a more stable environment.

We have done this through consultation with both frontline organizations and support workers, and through that consultation two groups were identified and those were women without children in their immediate care and also children who are aging out of the child protection system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Transitional housing for family violence survivors

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, what access to transitional housing do survivors of family violence have today?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Currently, government supports several community organizations, NGOs, who deliver emergency services to both women and children who are fleeing abuse, as well as support services to women who are experiencing violence within their relationship.

Through child protection services, we also provide support and care to children who are no longer able to live with their parents in their home, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Transitional housing for children aging out of system

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, can you update the House on what progress you've made to date on the construction of these transitional units, and when can survivors of family violence or children aging out of the system move in?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In collaborative effort between family and human services and the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, a tender has been issued to remove the surplus building that is on the land currently and following that site remediation, construction is anticipated to begin in the spring of 2019.

When that construction is complete, we will have 20 new homes for survivors of family violence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Mr. Speaker, my question is to either the Premier or the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, whichever would prefer to take the question.

Ministers, the economic engine of Alberta, indeed all of Canada, is in an economic crisis.

The new premier of New Brunswick believes Energy East is possible with the new premier in Quebec and plans on discussing this with him at the next First Ministers' Meeting.

PEI support for other provinces re: energy

What steps are we taking as a province to support our friends in Alberta which is in our own self-interest?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I will be attending the First Ministers' Meetings on Thursday and Friday and take part on a conference call with the premiers this afternoon.

It's always Prince Edward Island's view in approaching our relations with our provincial counterparts to assist in collaboration, to assist in the development of national initiatives, and Prince Edward Island would be supportive of the initiative that the premier of New Brunswick is taking in this matter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Premier, have you been in discussions with both premiers since they've changed and become premiers on this topic?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the premier of Alberta has been in office since May 5th 2015, indeed one day after our own

election so we've had many opportunities to discuss matters of national importance.

One of the first files that was on our joint table indeed was the early initiative of that government to combat climate change. So, of course, we've discussed energy and climate change on many occasions. I did speak with Premier Higgs – he was premier-designate Higgs at the time – on Saturday the third of November.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: So Premier, in your opinion, do you believe the political climate in Quebec has changed enough that the pipeline east could become a reality?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Since in the past four years or within the past four years, we've had quite a few changes on the political scene and around the first minister's table as members will be well aware a number of new premiers and indeed the Prime Minister has joined us in the period that I'm talking about.

One has to be continuously engaged with colleagues, has to be continuously assessing the political climate, including the issues that may be raised or the positions taken by premiers right across the board. I'm sure that the Premier of British Columbia – while not on the route that you're talking about or that has been spoken about – may indeed have views on this.

My job as Premier of Prince Edward Island is to build personal relationships, to build a following for the issues that are of primary interest to the people of Prince Edward Island and to do our best to contribute to the success of the Canadian Confederation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

According to the front page article in today's *Guardian*, the *Municipal Government Act* is forcing councillors at the town of Charlottetown to and I quote: "take control of naming standing committee and their chairs out of the mayor's hands."

In that article the Deputy Mayor of Charlottetown is quoted as saying, quote: "For time eternal, it's been done by the mayor, but it definitely was not the call of the city council, it was the call of the provincial government".

Sometimes the *Municipal Government Act* feels like something out of the George Orwell novel, *1984*.

Changes to council re: *Municipal Government Act*

Question to the minister responsible for the *Municipal Government Act*: Why are you playing big brother and forcing councils large and small to make questionable changes with tight timelines?

Mr. LaVie: Ooh.

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

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

I can assure I'm not playing big brother. As the Premier indicated earlier –

An Hon. Member: That was good.

Mr. LaVie: You standing?

An Hon. Member: Little brother.

Mr. R. Brown: – we had a great Saturday at the municipal government review at Covehead where over 180 municipal councillors from across Prince Edward Island came together, willing to work together, and I think it was a great day.

Last night, I had the opportunity to go down and see the swearing in of the new mayor and council in Three Rivers. I looked around the room on Saturday, and I looked around the room last night, and I think we have very capable people that can deal with these issues internally.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Even councilor Bob Doiron, this government's candidate (Indistinct) record in District 11 by-election said: it's an underhanded move for the current council to do days before Brown takes office.

The Premier and Cabinet are sitting over there like the dystopian ministers of truth, love, peace and plenty, when really they are the ministers of power, control, corruption and patronage.

Mr. LaVie: Ooh.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Experienced councillors have been elected for decades. The devil is in the details, and it's clear that councillors don't agree with the broad reaching controls of the *Municipal Government Act*.

Mr. LaVie: Truth is hard.

Mr. Trivers: A question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, and big brother: Minister, did you consult directly with longtime municipal councillors – like those in the City of Charlottetown – about the *Municipal Government Act*?

Speaker: Hon. member, you used the word 'corruption' and I think you should withdraw that word. It is unparliamentary.

Mr. Trivers: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Okay, thank you.

The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the hon. member.

I thank him for the question, because if he did sit in council, he'd know how hard councils work. If he took the time to go to a couple of council meetings and meet with councillors throughout Prince Edward Island, he'd see how hard they work.

I've sat on the city council for 14 years, and I did go through an amalgamation. At the end of the day, it works and it works good.

As I said to the members at Covehead on Friday, you'll have some tough meetings, you'll think you're separated and will not come back together, but as Peter Kays used to tell me: say it in the meetings, but leave as friends and continue to be friends.

If they follow that advice, we'll have a great council right across Prince Edward Island here. What I saw Saturday, we will have a great set of councils right across this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's this government that chose to put specifics like timelines directly in the *Municipal Government Act*. In this case, it was dictated that councils have to have committee bylaws in place 12 months after the act came into effect this December.

This has continuously put the minister in a position where he needs to use the sledgehammer of his overriding authority to overrule law.

The official opposition has recognized these unnecessary limitations and has taken action. I have three bills on the floor of this Legislature that are meant to amend the *MGA* to give the minister and municipalities more flexibility in complying with the act. Yet, this minister has vowed to vote these bills down.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Power and flexibility in municipalities

Mr. Trivers: A question to the minister, mister big brother: Minister, why do you want to strip municipalities of power and flexibility in governing their jurisdictions?

An Hon. Member: Yes!

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

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

I want to take the opportunity to thank the staff of municipal affairs. They put on a great event on Saturday. They work extremely hard. They go the extra mile, my staff.

Upon recommendation of my staff just yesterday or the day before, the extension – I'm giving a six month extension to municipalities to put those bylaws in place. So I do have the authority under the act to make changes, and I will exercise those authorities, but only on the advice from my staff and from the advice of municipalities.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, your final question.

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

It used to be that the duly elected mayor of a municipality was given the responsibility to set up standing committees, and name their chairs as they saw fit. In yet another example of the *Municipal Government Act* overstepping its bounds, we see that power stripped from the mayor.

A question to the minister: What's wrong with the old way of appointing committees?

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

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

In order to have a great council, you have to work together, and you have to work together on some real tough issues. You can't be one person going out and controlling the whole situation.

I believe what is occurring now in the City of Charlottetown is a minor blip. They'll get over it and they'll go on to make Charlottetown a better place to live, work, and play. I can see it throughout the municipalities in Prince Edward Island. If you would have been there on Saturday – the hon. member would have come out and saw Saturday – over 185 councillors getting together, first and foremost to make their communities a better place for their residents.

Mr. LaVie: We just had ours last night.

Mr. R. Brown: We owe it to these councillors, the opportunity to govern.

What is the member from the opposition talking about? He wants to be the big brother.

Some Hon. Members: Yeah, yeah.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: He wants to be the big brother, and he wants to tell everything what should happen. Matter of fact, I think he wants to be the mayor of Prince Edward Island.

So I say just cool down, take a breath.

An Hon. Member: Cool down.

Mr. R. Brown: Have a good Christmas. We'll be back in April. We'll have discussions with the federation of municipalities and with the new councillors.

Mr. Trivers: You're the minister of truth.

Mr. R. Brown: And if changes have to be made, changes will be made.

Have a great Christmas and enjoy yourself.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]