



Session:	3/65
Date:	5 December 2018
No:	74

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

WEDNESDAY, 5 DECEMBER 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.

Last week we talked about the huge amounts of money that government has collected from PNP deposit forfeits. Close to \$41 million alone just in the last three years.

**Notification to PNP client re: money forfeited**

Question to the immigration minister: How does government notify a PNP client that their deposit money has been forfeited?

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm sorry. I was reading something when the member asked me that. Could he repeat it again just for clarification, I want to know if it's the program that we've closed or if it was something else?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Yeah. Hon. leader, I'll get you to ask the question.

**Mr. LaVie:** Check your notes there.

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

As I stated last week, we talked about the huge amounts of money that government has collected from PNP deposit forfeits. Close to \$41 million in the last three years alone.

Question: How does government notify a PNP client that their deposit money has been forfeited?

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That clarification was good, because that was the program that is closed.

How we would connect with people to get their forfeit, their deposit, is to connect with them with the information that they give us at time of application.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

A common way to notify PNP clients that their deposit money has been forfeited is by letter, assuming that you have their current contact information for that client.

Question to the immigration minister: How does government notify PNP clients that they're losing their deposit money if government has no contact information for that client?

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As people go through this program, we get a lot of contact information from them and there's a verification process that we go through during that. We would use the information that we were given at time of application.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

That seems odd because when we asked questions previously about the Sherwood Motel, this minister said that he didn't have the contact information.

There are challenges government faces when it loosely manages a program involving millions upon millions of dollars.

Question to the immigration minister: Shouldn't alarm bells have gone off when

you couldn't find your PNP clients to tell them that you were keeping their money?

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We contact all of the folks that applied through our PNP program, through the business stream.

**Leader of the Opposition:** At the Sherwood Motel?

**Mr. Palmer:** And we do communicate to them to the address that they give us at time of application. We continue to stay in touch with them as it goes through the process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So if government collected close to \$41 million from PNP forfeitures in three years, it would mean a lot of letters were mailed out according to the minister.

#### **Letters sent out to PNP clients between 2015 and 2018**

Question to the minister: How many letters did your government send out to PNP clients telling them their deposit was being forfeited between 2015 and 2018?

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will take that under advisement, and I will get the number and bring it back here. I know we were sending out fewer and fewer letters each year, because our retention rates were starting to get better, but they weren't getting good enough for us and they weren't getting good enough for Islanders.

**Leader of the Opposition:** So CESA shut you down.

**Mr. Palmer:** So that's a program that we closed. We will – I'll get that information and I'll certainly bring it back.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We could also, I guess, just do the math at \$25,000 for residency and language deposit. It would be between 1,500 and 2,000, just using your own numbers. That's how many letters should have gone out to your PNP clients between 2015 and 2018 to tell them that they had defaulted.

Question to the minister: Those deposit forfeiture letters that were sent between 2015 and 2018 – how many of them did you not have addresses for?

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll also get that information, but we would have gathered contact information at time of application. So we would have addresses – I would assume, but I will certainly check that out and bring that back, because I'd like to make sure that that information is all very accurate.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So according to IIDI annual reports, government tracks some data about the PNP clients, like what percentage of clients were in which program stream, the demographic percentages, and their country of origin percentages.

#### **Percentage of PNP clients defaulted**

Question to the minister: What percentage of PNP clients defaulted on their deposits between 2015 and 2018?

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I'll bring those numbers back, but I do know our retention rates were getting better every year through a combination of efforts that we had undertaken and adjustments that we had made to the program over the years – one of those being the community endorsement. I will certainly bring that information back.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So certainly since I've been elected, PNP has been a major file for government as far as something that they have had in a complete and utter mess. More recently, this exact situation has brought this government down to the courthouse, which is happening today. Keeping track of how many people defaulted on the program would seem like one of the key indicators to measure your performance.

#### **Letters sent out to PNP clients between 2015 and 2018 (further)**

Question to the minister: What percentage of PNP deposit forfeit letters sent to clients between 2015 and 2018 didn't have any address?

**Leader of the Opposition:** Good question.

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I will bring that information back. We would have received contact information at time of application. I would assume it would be 100% we would have contact information for. But let me get that information back to the House on the dates that we're requesting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So back in the spring, this minister told the House that out of 650 people who used the Sherwood Motel as its address only 17 reported Sherwood Motel as their residence in this province.

#### **Approval of clients at Sherwood Motel**

Question to the minister: Why did the government approve 17 PNP clients who gave you the Sherwood Motel as their permanent address?

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Mr. Speaker, the way the process works is when folks are coming here to PEI to begin the process, and even before they come to PEI, we need some contact information for them. Sometimes it's a hotel, but then it will be switched to a more permanent address. So, –

**Leader of the Opposition:** Toronto, Vancouver (Indistinct)

**Mr. Palmer:** – that wouldn't be out of the ordinary, to have a hotel as the beginning address, when the application process starts.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think the minister's question behind the question I just asked, because we clearly laid out that these were permanent residents – according to his numbers, anyways, and that's what he told this House.

Of the 17 clients who said the Sherwood Motel was their address, 14 defaulted on the residency portion of their ESCROW, meaning that the province kept their deposit, meaning that the province had to notify them what they did.

#### **Letters sent to 14 PNP clients at Sherwood Motel**

A question to the minister: Why were no red flags raised when you mailed 14 separate letters to the Sherwood Motel, informing clients that you were keeping their money?

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will take that information back, as I have already promised to the hon. member –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Palmer:** – and we will get the details on that because we want to make sure that we are accurate with the information that we have. I'll certainly bring that back.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** Thank you, minister.

**Mr. LaVie:** Lost your clappers. Lost your clappers.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### **Revoking nomination certificates**

A question to the minister: Can you explain how government failed to revoke the nomination certificates, rescinding approval for these clients – instead turning a blind eye and simply pocketing their money?

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is a due diligence piece of this that we go through all the time while we are evaluating the applications; some of those we do turn away and some of those that we will nominate for their permanent residency with the federal government. We continue to look at all of these and will due diligence on each one of the applications that come in.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So the government only tracked these individuals who actually reported to IIDI offices in person. Of the 605 PNP clients, who used the address to have their permanent residency card mailed to another address in Canada, the minister only has records of 17.

### **Selling of Canadian passports**

A question to the minister: Will you admit that this government has no tracking, no paper work, and no idea of the whereabouts of the other 588 people that you sold Canadian passports to.

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We do gather contact information as people enter the program, and we continue to update those as part of the discovery that we do, as they go through the process to make sure that there is fulfillment. Those addresses – the questions that we're talking about here are federal – these are federal charges. This information was given to federal authorities. We don't have those addresses here on the files that we reviewed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, the Canadian Press told government that CBSA informed them that all of these clients were PEI PNP clients, and their status was unknown to CBSA, as they were provincial nominees.

### **Provincial investigation for PNP case**

A question to the minister: Why, then, would this government refuse to launch their own investigation to get to the bottom of this residency fraud scandal that your government created?

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Mr. Speaker, these are federal charges and we continue to work with the

federal government to assist them with this because as the member knows, these permanent residencies is a federal jurisdiction and we continue to work with them to help deliver all information that we have when it is requested.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is a provincial mess that has been created by this government and –

**Mr. J. Brown:** Gail Shea (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** – the government refuses to clean it up; the government refuses to acknowledge it –

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** – the government refuses to even acknowledge that this is the biggest problem that this government has faced here on Prince Edward Island.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** Not only did they pocket 14 residency deposits from the Sherwood Motel; the other three of the 17 with that listed address actually convinced the province that they lived there. And this government gave them their residency deposit back.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

### Returned residency deposits

**Mr. Myers:** A question to the minister: How did you approve three clients to live at the Sherwood Motel and give them their residency deposit back?

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Mr. Speaker.

I will check on those three applications to see that we did actually give those deposits back –

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Fox:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Palmer:** – and I'll that back here because we want to make sure we are accurate with all of the information that we deliver.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So this government used to break down the number of immigrants defaulting every year in the IIDI annual report. The Minister of Finance stopped that when he was in charge in 2017 and it was missing in this year's annual report, too.

### Immigrant defaults no longer released in IIDI report

A question to the minister: Why are you refusing to publically release the breakdown defaults and refunds in the last two years?

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll gather that information and bring it back to the House. That is something that we continue to track, it's one of the important measurements of the program, and it's one of the things that led us to one of the pieces of evidence that we had that helped us in the decision to close the program.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, it was revealed here in the House that there are over 11,000 people – Islanders – on the patient registry list. But, in 2016, we know from a written question response

that there were only 8,400 Islanders on that patient registry.

### **Doubling of patient registry list**

Question to the health minister: How did the patient registry grow in size by nearly half in just two short years?

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct) math's not very good.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I did indicate yesterday –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Mitchell:** – that we do currently, as of Monday morning when I got that report that we go have 11,822 patients that are on the registry. But, I did indicate yesterday that we have three physicians who have retired and one had left the province, which leaves us with an additional 3,800 patients that are not on the registry but are not associated with a doctor.

I guess that proves that I may be a better politician than a mathematician because I indicated those numbers were subtracted.

When physicians leave or retire, it seems to be better to keep their patients – those registries – together, it becomes easier to recruit physicians to take on all of those individual pieces.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't really think I got an answer, but we'll move on.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

### **Patient registry waiting list**

**Mr. MacEwen:** A question to the health minister: How does someone on the patient

registry actually find out where they are at on that waiting list?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is a contact number that anybody who is on the registry can call in. Just last week, the last week of November, 45 Islanders were given a physician.

I indicated yesterday that when you look at the numbers of 11,000 plus the other patients, we have a population of about 9% or 10% of Islanders who don't have a physician; but, conversely, 92% of Islanders do have a pharmacare provider, and that is much better than the national average of –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Mitchell:** – 84% across the country –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) you and I got to talk after this.

**Mr. Mitchell:** – that do not have a physician.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're talking to Islanders who are calling in, and their being told: Don't call us, we'll call you – you don't have to be on the patient registry, we'll keep all those lists together and transfer.

We hear from people who say: You know what, I've been waiting for so long, my neighbour who has been waiting a less amount of time, all of a sudden has a family doctor.

### **Annual reporting re: patient registry**

A question to the health minister: What annual reporting is done by government on the state of the patient registry?

**Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, anybody can call at any time to see where they are on the patient registry.

I've asked as a department that we can post these numbers online, and they will be posted online in the very near future. They will come under several headings of patients in West Prince that are looking, East Prince that are needing a doctor, Central Queens, Queens, Southern Kings and Eastern Kings.

It will be very transparent of Islanders to see exactly how many people are on the patient registry. I continue to work with the Medical Society of Prince Edward Island, to find solutions to methods and ways that we can incorporate other healthcare professionals to draw people off the patient registry. They have been very supportive of that, and we will continue to work towards those ends.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well now we're getting somewhere. Although, I still don't like this very soon talk.

We've been talking about a patient registry here for all as long as I've been paying attention to the Legislature.

**Mr. LaVie:** Eight years.

**Mr. MacEwen:** I am grateful to hear that that stuff is going to start being posted –

**Mr. LaVie:** Eight years.

**Mr. MacEwen:** – because you know what –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacEwen:** – do you know how we've been finding out information about this? We have to put in written questions to find answers years later; we have to do freedom of information requests to find this information.

It is very satisfying to hear that this minister is finally, finally going to start posting this stuff.

### **Key performance indicators for patient registry**

Another question to the health minister: What key performance indicators is this government going to use to measure the effectiveness of this patient registry going forward?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

As I said, we are trying to make this as transparent as possible for all Islanders to see how many people are on the patient registry. I'd like to remind the hon. member that he does not need to provide written questions to find the answers to these questions – simply give me a call and I can have the answer to him within ten minutes.

**Ms. Biggar:** Yeah.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**An Hon. Member:** Oh.

**Mr. Myers:** Put them in writing and wait four years.

**Mr. R. Brown:** He doesn't know the numbers (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to hear that this minister is much more committed to getting responses back than many of his colleagues over there.

I've got a pretty decent memory here for sure and I can remember back in 2007 when this minister was going door to door in Sherwood, knocking on every door saying: I promise you, I promise you, a doctor for every Islander. We all remember that promise in 2007 and that's when this minister was first elected.

**Mr. LaVie:** You said it too.

**Mr. MacEwen:** How do we go from a doctor for every Islander when he was first elected –

**Mr. LaVie:** The Premier said it.

**Mr. MacEwen:** – to a patient registry with over 11,000 names on it today.

**Mr. Myers:** Won't be fooled again.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. LaVie:** The Premier said it to get elected, you said it too.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When I indicate the patient registry, we are working towards ensuring that every Islander has a health professional to go and see to have their health care needs met.

When you look across the country, we are no different – actually, we are better by 11% –

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great.

**Mr. Mitchell:** – than other provinces across the country who all have residences of their provinces needing physicians. Obviously, we continue to recruit physicians to the province, we continue to work with nurse practitioners, we want to ensure that every Islander has their health care needs met in the best possible way.

We will continue to do that as we have from 2007 and we will continue over the next dozen years to do that.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) 12 years, most of you.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Another broken promise.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

As I mentioned in my opening remarks today is World Soil Health Day and the crop rotation act was put in place in order to foster good soil management, which is the foundation of good agriculture – ultimately of sustainable and profitable farming.

Earlier this fall, the Standing Committee on Communities, Land and Environment discussed the *Agricultural Crop Rotation Act* and its enforcement, in particular, the amount of land that is exempt from the normal three year rotation required by the act.

When asked how many acres of the fields under contract at Cavendish Farms were exempt, Robert Irving said this: it's quite high, I would think.

#### **Island farmland acres exempt from act**

A question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: How many acres of Island farmland are exempt from the three year requirement of the crop rotation act?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

**Mr. Henderson:** When it comes to the crop rotation act, there's some definitions of what's determined a row crop versus just a crop. So row crops would be defined as potatoes, something that's in a row – carrots would be defined as a row crop.

To my knowledge there is no crops that are contrary to the crop rotation act being grown on Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. LaVie:** That was short.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you.

I understand that this data is neither collected nor kept, while I accept that the number of years between row crops is only one critical aspect of good soil management,

many farmers because of the razor thin profit margins on potatoes are now growing cash crops, like corn and soya as part of the three, or even a two-year rotation.

To the same minister: how are exemptions granted and who monitors compliance?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

**Mr. Henderson:** To my understanding, if an individual farmer wants to get an exemption, they would have to make an application to the minister – I believe it's the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment for that particular request –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Henderson:** – to my knowledge there's been no exemptions granted and I want to emphasize, when you look at crops – like I said, there's a difference between a row crop and other particular crops. Soybeans is not considered a row crop, grain is not a row crop, forages are not row crops.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you.

And corn, strangely is also not considered a row crop.

To the same minister, with an 18 year study telling us that soil organic matter has been on a steady decline in Prince Edward Island, clearly the current practices are not enhancing soil health and are therefore threatening Island farmers long-term wellbeing.

### **Review of act to improve soil health**

To the minister: Will you undertake a comprehensive review of the act, specifically focused on improving soil health?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

**Mr. Henderson:** As the hon. member mentions, he is very right in saying that soil health is imperative in providing good crops,

good sustainable agriculture in the province of Prince Edward Island, or anywhere else.

We have actually implemented growers groups, and these grower groups work together and try to actually farm their watershed as a watershed region so they're not having fields on the same rotation by different farmers – so they can mix that up a bit to make sure that they're providing sustainable agriculture.

I'm happy to work with growers, work with the industries, for whatever commodity it is, to try to make sure that we're providing the best of possibilities for soil health in this province, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Casey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: the November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018 summary on the parliamentary precinct master plan stated and I quote: that by the end of November 2018, the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy will be closer to understanding and confirming the outcome of the parks PSPC functional review and schematic design process at Province House.

Minister, the rules of the Legislative Assembly state: the legislative management committee is responsible for the facilities and services required for a fully functioning Legislature.

### **Facilities needed in plan for Legislature at Province House**

Minister, does your department have a plan to invest the \$6 million in Province House and have you shared that plan and received confirmation from the legislative management committee or the Clerk's office that your plan will result in the facilities needed for a fully functioning Legislature at Province House?

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all I want to assure the Legislative Assembly and all Islanders that we are committed as a government to a full review and are in the middle of that. As was mentioned, we did do an intern report which was presented to the Legislative Assembly office on November 2<sup>nd</sup>.

In regard to the precinct itself, the precinct is identified as Province House and the George Coles Building, the J. Angus MacLean Building and the Rectory.

We are in the middle of finalizing the final review, we are being in touch working, certainly with the Legislative Assembly staff and Parks Canada and Public Works Canada and we will expect to have the final report in very soon.

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

**Ms. Casey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Have all concerns, issues and operational challenges raised by the legislative management committee and the Clerk's office respecting the facility requirements for the Assembly been addressed by your department?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In looking at each individual part of the precinct review, one of them is certainly Province House and there were a number of things that have been identified there in the interim report which we are continuing to have discussions on with Parks Canada.

That is where we targeted as a start, the \$6 million – the federal government, we are very fortunate here – that have invested \$60 million for the restoration of Province House and recognizing that we want to make the Province House a workable facility beyond the restoration.

There are some other improvements like accessibility, improvements to ventilation and climate control, broadcast services and security – so, identifying that as an estimate within the capital budget to be able to

proceed – we have identified the \$6 million for that.

I certainly don't have time to explain everything that's in the report and I'll be tabling during tabling of documents.

**Mr. Fox:** (Indistinct)

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

**Ms. Casey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, your department has put a \$6 million figure in the capital budget for Province House.

### **Assurance of facility plan for Province House**

Given that all concerns, issues and operational challenges have not yet been addressed, what assurance can you provide this House that a comprehensive facility plan will be submitted to the legislative management committee for approval, thus respecting the rules of this Assembly and allowing the legislative management committee to fulfill its responsibilities as assigned to it by all members of this House?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I had noted earlier, we have weekly meetings with the staff of the Legislative Assembly who are working on that project, with Parks Canada, working forward to identifying a final master plan that can be looked forward to the functionality of the Legislative Assembly and the precinct itself. There are a lot of other changes in regard to moving a number of facilities around to make sure that there's lots of room for everyone.

It's fully explained in the report and I will be tabling the interim report during tabling of documents.

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

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Recently, Highway 2 was closed for a few hours due to an accident in Portage. This particular location is between Portage and West Devon that was closed and it's the only passage to West Prince, which includes the towns of O'Leary, Alberton, Tignish, and many other municipalities. This is obviously concerning when the road closes. It means that there's no other way to get into West Prince or, heaven forbid, try to leave in case of an emergency because all access is cut off.

### **Alternate route for Highway 2 in West Prince**

Minister, can you tell the House if emergency measures has a contingency plan in place for such occurrences as there is no alternate route?

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

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

I would thank the hon. member, too, for the question.

There were some questions asked earlier this week on this general matter.

PEI emergency measures office is responsible for creating and maintaining something called the provincial all-hazards emergency response plan. That plan can be found on the government website and it outlines the roles and responsibilities of all government departments in an emergency such as this.

Its objective is to coordinate the activities of the province's response in a major emergency and to protect Prince Edward Islanders in that event, and to protect and reduce any loss of property or economic loss or disruption.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

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

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, West Prince residents, they need to know and they deserve to know that if something happens in that area of Route 2 that there is a contingency plan.

### **Emergency plan for West Prince**

Can the minister tell the House exactly how emergency vehicles such as ambulances or fire trucks will get through?

Also, minister, will you commit to the House today to reach out to first responders in each of these communities to develop and/or update a plan specifically for West Prince?

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

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

This plan does not focus on specific emergencies. You would need – I would say it would be impossible to develop a plan that would list all of the different emergencies and responses to them. But what it does do, is it delineates how departments will work together to coordinate in the event of such an emergency.

As an example, if the road was blocked, EMS, for example, might do a patient transfer at the site of the blocked area. It would depend on what the emergency is, how long it was so last and what the requirements might be.

**Mr. LaVie:** You have no idea (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you.

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

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A contingency plan is necessary now and in the immediate short-term solution – we have to do something. We also need a long-term solution.

Will the minister work with his colleague, the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, to examine,

perhaps, an alternate route? Maybe – I'm going to throw it out there – maybe extending the Canadian Road and hooking it to the Cascumpec Road so that West Prince residents have an alternate route.

Thank you.

**Mr. LaVie:** No plan (Indistinct)

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

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

This plan is updated regularly. In fact, just last month the team came together to test the plan at their annual emergency operations centre exercise, and we're open to all options at all points in time.

But, emergency response is always directed by the specifics of a situation, as I indicated previously, and there are many factors that need to be considered in each individual situation. This is why we have a team of experts at EMO that prepares for these kinds of emergencies, that updates the plan regularly and that is always open to input, as the hon. member has made here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The National Energy Board report released in November of this year clearly indicates that solar energy can reduce energy costs and carbon output.

### **Government buildings with solar panels**

Question to the energy minister: How many government buildings currently have solar panels installed to reduce energy costs with locally-produced renewable energy?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe I answered that question yesterday –

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. LaVie:** No, you didn't answer it.

**An Hon. Member:** You did.

**An Hon. Member:** No, you didn't.

**Mr. LaVie:** Answer.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No, the minister didn't.

### **Provincial manors with solar panels**

Our provincial manors use a lot of energy and the two new manors coming online after years of government delay – question to the energy minister: Are there solar panels in place producing local renewable energy on any of the provincial manors under your leadership?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, local renewable energy? Yes, there are.

The Prince County Hospital and the Summerset Manor are 100% heated by renewable energy, biomass.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Biomass, great.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) solar.

**Ms. Biggar:** The manor – Wedgewood Manor and Elm Street school in Summerside are heated by 100% renewable energy – biomass.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** We have a number of buildings and in regard to the manors, the manor in Tyne Valley, which I will announce, certainly, the residents moved into today.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Biggar:** That's not heated by oil. It's not a renewable, but it is a carbon reduction. We're heating that with propane, but all our

– we have numerous buildings across the government that are heated with biomass. We're continuing to develop renewable and we will continue on with that.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Clearly, we have a minister that does not know about solar energy. She's never heard of it.

**Mr. LaVie:** No.

**Mr. Fox:** Transportation accounts for nearly half of our carbon emissions in this province. A new government garage is being developed out past the airport, much of our highway maintenance and the school bus fleets will be serviced at this new depot.

#### **New government garage solar panels**

Question to the energy minister: Are there any solar panels planned at this new facility under your leadership?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are building our new building out at the government garage with the roof that will hold and sustain solar panels on it, so that we are prepared for future development in solar energy.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, she's holding and sustaining. The lack of solar panels at the new government garage seems like a lost opportunity. Last week when we raised the idea of having more solar energy produced locally, the energy minister told the media that if more Islanders used solar, then the province

would have to look at an energy grid upgrade.

#### **Capacity of current electrical grid**

Question to the energy minister: How much extra energy can our electrical grid handle at this point?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, we do know that solar energy is certainly renewable energy and we're watching developments and the advancements in that very closely.

We need to have the generation – it only occurs during the day, which is why we're developing our wind energy policy.

Just out, we have issued an RFP that will be going out for another 30 megawatts of wind power.

**Mr. Trivers:** Newsflash (Indistinct)

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** And we will be continuing to develop our solar – our wind and our biomass. We had 20 new tenders –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** – come back in for 20 new areas across government buildings. That's renewable energy. Wind is renewable energy. We're the second in the world – wind energy and we're going to continue to develop that.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Right on, minister.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't about you, but I never heard an answer to that question. –

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

In fact, Maritime Electric has stated that the grid can handle an extra 10% of more energy from any source. Right now, locally

produced solar energy makes up less than point 2%.

**Mr. Trivers:** Lots of room.

### **Solar energy and costly upgrades to grid**

**Mr. Fox:** Question to the energy minister: Isn't the saying that having more solar energy would force costly upgrades to the energy grid just a bit of a dodge from your department?

**Some Hon. Members:** Ooh.

**Mr. Myers:** You're clawing your way back up Jamie.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** We're very pleased with the development that Islanders have come forward on with using electrification with their heat pump systems.

We're now using 15% more electricity than we have since 2015 through all of our electrification programs. We're working on those programs, we're working towards smart grid that's something that we need to work to improve, and we're going to be continuing to work on innovative ways that we can put more electricity on the system and balance that out properly. We'll continue on those innovations.

**Mr. R. Brown:** That's smart.

**Mr. LaVie:** Last chance to be smart, last chance.

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

**Mr. Fox:** My final question. Well, I'd like to know why this energy minister fails to recognize solar power. She fails to recognize.

In fact, the Island company Solar Island Electric, was formally specified to qualify for the CEBD program. This has helped many Islanders to invest to get a 35% equity tax credit to help offset the installation costs. However, when Solar Island Electric applied for more shares to support this program, this

government and this minister turned them down.

**Mr. LaVie:** Oh shame.

**Mr. Fox:** Why are you so against having Islanders invest in solar power?

**Some Hon. Members:** Ooh.

**Mr. Myers:** Saved by the bell.

**An Hon. Member:** Rescued.

**Mr. Myers:** Call in the House doctor.

Leaders of speech, the last one.

**Mr. Trivers:** Minister of almost everything.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaking in regards to first of all solar – passive solar is solar. So there are other options of solar and solar panels, hon. member.

**Ms. Biggar:** Yes.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Anyway, we've looked at this program. We have companies that are utilizing this program. We had a new one last year. We will continue to build on what we have in regards to this program that the hon. member is talking about.

I think it is an opportunity for Islanders. We're actually reviewing this, and we haven't discontinued this program. I'm not sure where that information is coming from, but we're working with the companies that are presently utilizing it and Solar Island, I know, has been in contact with our office and we'll continue to work with them and possibly expand what we have already.

I think there are opportunities and larger opportunities relevant to this program that we should be looking at.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[End of Question Period]