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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

THURSDAY, 5 APRIL 2018



Questions by Members

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

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

As we all are aware, or should be aware, home care is an essential service for Islanders and it's government's duty to provide quality healthcare to those who need it in the comfort of their homes, maintaining their independence as long as possible. The existing public home care service is effective, but unfortunately is chronically underfunded.

**Changes to home care delivery model**

Question to the minister of health: Why did government choose to change the delivery model for home care without public consultation?

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

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

It is a pleasure to rise and again welcome those that work in the home care field that are with us in the gallery today. As I said earlier, I've had several occasions now to have conversations with them about this particular issue of home care.

This is a result of a few weeks ago where we signed our bi-lateral health accord funding with the federal government which laid out fairly stringent criteria of moving forward with our 10-year bi-lateral funding agreement, which had a primary focus on home care and on mental healthcare, as well with, as I said, criteria that was established by them for their own accountability measures.

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

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

Without public consultation, government decided to expand private delivery of home care services rather than strengthening the existing public system.

**Expansions of private home care delivery**

Question to the minister of health: What convinced you and your government that expanding private delivery of home care was better than making the existing public system stronger?

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

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

The decision to use advanced care of paramedics from Island EMS was a decision that was made to add another layer of enhancement to home care. There were some issues being looked at in regards to rapid bridging on our palliative care side of things, as well as rapid bridging on home from hospital, where we all know and understand that families want their loved one to be recuperating, to be living in an environment where they want to recover quicker. That's where individuals recover faster, so this is part of a process of enhancing home care; adding one more layer.

There are a lot of professionals that work there now and many of them in the room today, whether it's RNs, LPNs, RCWs, occupational therapists or nutritionists. This is another layer added to their overall work.

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

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

Good home care services takes pressure off our overflowing emergency rooms. In fact, 4,500 Islanders accessed home care in 2016, which shows how great the need is.

**Access to new home care model**

Again, question to the minister of health: How many more Islanders will be able to access home care services through your new home care model?

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

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

As I indicated earlier, I know full well the work that these individuals do and the value of this work. I know this because I know it firsthand from my family using the services of these wonderful folks, and the great work and the vital work that they do.

Many on the floor of this Legislature may have family members that have used the service of home care, and we all know that individuals that we all love and care for, including my wife's grandmother today at 97-years-old, is living home in her own (Indistinct) where she wants to be because of the great care that's received from these home care individuals.

We are looking to enhance home care overall for all Islanders from tip-to-tip to make it the best service it can be.

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

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

Unfortunately, government had been working in secret on this new model, raising many questions about what this will look like for all Islanders. Again, I go back to, there was absolutely no public consultation on this.

#### **Deal signed with Medavie on privatized home care**

Question to the minister of health: Will you publicly release the home care deal signed with Medavie as New Brunswick did when they privatized home care?

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

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

The lead up to this new method of going forward there was a significant number of meetings. There was management of healthcare teams, there was Island EMS, there were members of the department and there were members of Health PEI. There was a significant amount of discussion going on.

When it moves forward, that's when we look for more and in-depth input from the

frontline service. I've indicated to all the workers that now is the time that we want to hear from them. We want to hear their thoughts on how we can make it the best program it can be. At the end of the day, it's all about the very best care for that client that is home in their own environment where they want to be and making that better, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Trivers:** Will you release the contract?

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

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

The minister talked about some of the groups that he met with and consulted with behind closed doors, but my question was about public consultation, which there was zero. I also asked the minister if he would make public this secret agreement with Medavie, which he refused to answer that question, so I'm going to move onto the Premier.

#### **Medavie contract and public tenders**

Question to the Premier: Why wasn't this work publicly tendered to make sure taxpayers were getting the best deal possible?

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

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

Certainly, there has been a relationship with Island EMS since back, I believe, it was 2005. I would think that all Islanders have a great respect for this facility of workers at Island EMS. We all know the reputation they have and we all know the reputation they have when they respond to emergency calls. The fact that they are located from tip-to-tip across PEI makes them the most obvious choice to do this new service with their advanced paramedics, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

I didn't know home care workers didn't work tip-to-tip on Prince Edward Island. My understanding was they did. That's quite a surprise. Forty-five hundred Islanders use home care services every year on Prince Edward Island and many more could.

Question to the Premier: How many other multi-year, multi-million dollar contracts has your government entered into without any public consultation and no public tender besides this Medavie contract?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to see if I can come back with an answer to that, but it's not something that I have at the tip of my fingers. I know that if you go back in time, you can find previous PC governments that did that kind of thing.

As I understand it, this is a one-year contract with Island EMS.

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

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

It's really strange, and Islanders would find it really strange for government to enter into a contract of this size without having any sort of public consultation or even any public awareness it was going on.

Question to the Premier: What was the justification for no public consultation and no public tender for this multi-million dollar side deal of yours?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Well, it may be that the minister of health can take that question if I'm wrong on this, but my understanding, Mr. Speaker, is that this runs on the order of \$400,000. I don't know where the multi-million dollar reference comes in.

Thank you.

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

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

It's good to hear the Premier admit has broken his own procurement rules because even \$400,000 is well beyond what – so you broke the rules. We're going to have to call in somebody to investigate because you broke the rules. Maybe your ethics commissioner that answers to you should hear about this. Maybe we'll ask her.

Anyways, there's no public tender, no public consultation, all kinds of money being thrown around. Sounds like the Bell Aliant deal. We'll always wonder is somebody somebody's friend here?

#### **Director at Medavie prior to Premier**

Question to the Premier: How long were you a director at Medavie before you became Premier of Prince Edward Island?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I'm glad this question has come up; give me a chance to clear the air on it. I served for six or seven years as a director of Island EMS and – which is a subset of Medavie. Over time, leading members of the Island community have served in a role there. My predecessor was Wayne Gray, before that it was Michael Farmer, who served for many years. Maybe the longest anyone ever did including as chair of that board. I was proud to serve in that capacity, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Six years is a long time. For the record, I've been elected for six years. For some people it may seem like I was around forever, so six years is a pretty long time to have a relationship inside an organization.

In the Premier's original conflict disclosure, did say he received income from those Medavie directorships, along with the Premier's two pensions from UPEI and other investment sources that he had.

Question to the Premier: Were your close business ties with Medavie helpful when your government negotiated this multi-million dollar contract with them?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I resigned from the board of Medavie, as well as chair of the Medavie Health Foundation, which, at the time was the – still is the largest health foundation in our region. I was involved in, in fact, establishing that. My relations with Medavie would have ended at that time when I entered public life. Indeed, it's part of the role that we play; the responsibility we have, and you might say the price we pay for participating in public life. I'm very happy to do that, and that was where my relationship with Medavie ended.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Everyone knows business relationships don't ever end. That's not the way they work; they just come up somewhere else down the road. Luckily, for Medavie, this one came up down the road and they had a cozy little relationship with you.

In 2016, former premier Robert Ghiz joined the Medavie board of directors; the same Robert Ghiz, by the way, who was added to the \$50 million lawsuit last week, which you are defending him for.

#### **Discussions with former premier re: home care agreement**

Question to the Premier: Did you have any discussions with Robert Ghiz about business opportunities for Medavie before entering into this multi-million dollar home care agreement with them?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** No, Mr. Speaker, I did not.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

You'll have to forgive me for finding the relationship a little bit too cozy. I'm sure lots of other Islanders are finding the business relationship a little cozy, too.

The Premier has a six-year relationship where he made money from the board of directors of Medavie. Former premier takes over his job to make money from the board of directors of – isn't it funny how former premiers or soon-to-be-premiers find a job at Medavie and all of a sudden there's boatloads of money handed with no contracts, no public consultation, no public tender.

#### **Untendered contract with Medavie**

Question to the Premier: Did Medavie's close business ties with you and Robert Ghiz help or hurt Medavie score an untendered contract for a multi-million dollars worth of home care work on Prince Edward Island?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, let me be clear: I ended my business relationship, my role with Medavie in 2014 when I entered public life. Further, I played no part in the determination of this contract.

May I add, Mr. Speaker, to go back to your words at the beginning of the session, I think we have a responsibility to stick to the facts; to not be trying to create conspiracies, or to make allegations where there is nothing, no reason whatsoever. People play a role in public life. People play a role in private life. It's a good thing, frankly, that we attract people into public life who come with some experience.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I was down at the wharf this morning and the guys and girls down there were asking me who I was going to be asking questions to. I said, the minister of health. They said: I hope you get a straight answer because on *Compass* last night we couldn't get a straight answer on mental health funding; simple questions like: is it going to be

increased or not. We're hoping that that's going to change here today.

Although, the Leader of the Opposition started asking straight questions: Will you table a document? Still no answer; let's try again.

### **Needs assessment prior to proposal**

Question to the health minister: Was there a needs assessment completed prior to submitting proposals to the federal government on this Medavie deal?

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

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

As I indicated earlier, this mobile integrated health initiative came out of discussions with management from home care, Island EMS, department, federal government because it was a federal initiative with their criteria that was fairly stringent that it had to be a new initiative.

That it would be a 10-year program; that we would run it out in the first year with a \$750,000 budget, 450,000 would go to Island EMS, 300,000 would go to three new home care nursing positions that would be the coordinators for the positions between Island EMS paramedics and home care staff that exist today.

This is where this all began under the direction of federal government.

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

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

I didn't ask for a history of the deal. I asked: Was there a needs assessment done and will the minister table it?

**Mr. Trivers:** Yeah. Answer the question.

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

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

Certainly, there was significant amount of work that went on prior to the time I took

the chair. As I said, this is a process that will enhance home care service across the Island. It's another layer that will allow paramedics to transition to home those individuals that want to be home. It also allows a stream for paramedics to drop in on clients, or clients can call them to come in so that they're not waiting in ER rooms or even having to be admitted because they're not being seen.

This is the overall goal. It's about client satisfaction. It's about client health and it's about good, positive outcomes for those individuals.

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

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

This isn't an AGM, this isn't in a conference; we're asking straight questions. This is why Islanders get frustrated. It's a simple question about a needs assessment. If you didn't do one, say 'no', if you did do one, say 'yes.'

Same question, Mr. Speaker. Was there a needs assessment done and will he table it?

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

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

And certainly I don't have all the information that was discussed at those meetings prior to my becoming the minister, but I certainly would go back and check to see what was available, either in document form, or in discussion form, and certainly I would bring those things back to the House, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

He doesn't know. That's telling.

The minister also said earlier in response to the Leader of the Opposition, he said: we're going to talk to the frontline workers now. We're going to hear what they have to say.

### **Discussions with frontline workers**

We have a lot of frontline workers here today. Why didn't you talk to them before we signed this deal?

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

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

Certainly this is work that had gone on for a significant amount of time. Now is the time for the input for the frontline workers. I've indicated that –

**Mr. Fox:** After the deal is done.

**Mr. Mitchell:** – at several meetings that I've had with the individuals, many of them that are in the room today. I welcome the fact that they're here today. I welcome the fact that they would like to come back to my board room again and further those discussions. I did learn a lot about the services that these folks provide today and I did learn a lot about the shortfalls that they encounter in their daily work – not only today, but in years past. Those are things that I'm going to look at – making improvements on towards them and I committed to that at meetings with them and I will continue to do that in the future, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

We learned today there were no public consultations; there was no consultation with the frontline workers. We know that there's chronic underfunding of home care in this province for quite some time.

#### **Discussions with public sector unions**

What kind of conversations, Minister, did you have with the public sector unions about how the health accord dollars could be used to improve services for Islanders?

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

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

Part of the discussions that I've had with the home care individuals that are sitting in this

room and probably in the overflow room today was about: What does this mean to them in the future? What does this mean to home care in the future? I guess anybody that looks at it big-picture, it's probably going to expand. I think that would be the case. And when that happens, we will have a good argument to go back to the federal government in years two and three to look for other avenues and enhancements – that we could hire different health care workers that need to be part of the service and expansions where they need to be. This is what is before us today: a new initiative under the criteria of the federal government, but I see great expansions for home care on Prince Edward Island in years two to 10.

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

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

This home care deal – the money was for new, innovative ideas. You've decided to go this route with Medavie.

Did the minister talk to the unions about their innovative ideas – about what they could have done with this type of federal funding? Was that discussed and was Medavie's option better than the union's ideas?

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

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

Obviously the criteria that was established was the criteria that we had to work under and we did a good job and we came up with a good plan to move forward with advanced paramedics that are very well trained – that can handle those situations – to transition patients to home until home care providers will be there. The three coordinating RNs at the top of the chain will be the providers of the information and the traffic flow.

This is going to be a good system and it will only get better as we grow it and more people remain home in their own homes – out of hospitals, out of institutions all across Prince Edward Island. This is a good day for home care – it'll be expanded because of this new interaction, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I don't doubt for a second that the folks at Island EMS, they're going to do a fantastic job and they're going to try and do everything to the best of their ability – they're great. But what we're asking about here today is: we don't know what else was out there. It's supposed to be for new, innovative programs. The Leader of the Opposition talked about putting out a proposal – do we know if it was the best deal? I don't think we even talked to the unions about what all the great ideas they could have probably done with this. Why didn't we do those things? Why didn't we find – maybe there was a deal with this money that could have gone three different ways. Why was it just the sole-source deal? Why didn't we talk to the unions about their new, innovative ideas before this deal happened?

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

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

Certainly we are talking to unions and we're talking to the health care professionals that we need to be talking to, hon. member and Mr. Speaker. Those conversations will continue – they're very valuable and there's been some great information come forward that they've been dealing with for the past number of years that I think we can make some good progress on.

I certainly do hope – as I offered to all those health care professionals – to give me a phone call, come on into the office and we can have more discussion about it, because that is where some of these things will come to the table and good things will come from, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of October, 2017, Cabinet created the *Employment Standards Act* exemption regulations which exempted, and

I quote, "...athletes while engaged in activities related to their athletic endeavors..." from certain sections of the act.

### **Employment rights stripped from young athletes**

A question the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning: Could you let us know exactly which employment rights your government has stripped away from young athletes?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

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

I thank the hon. member for the question. At this point the answer would be: there weren't any rights stripped from any athletes. The athletes were – there was some discussion and the athletes were being reimbursed for their duties and there wasn't any rights stripped from them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Almost a year before you created these exemption regulations, government introduced a bill – Bill No. 43, *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*, which contained a similar exemption. The bill was never brought forward to this House for second reading and therefore it died on the paper. That tells me, or suggests to me, that you did not want to have public debate on the issue and have to justify your actions.

A question to the minister: Do you think it shows openness and transparency for government to take away the rights of certain citizens in the privacy of the fifth floor?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

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

Our department and the different departments do great work in this field – in

*Employment Standards Act* and I don't have a copy of that act that you're referring to, hon. member, so I'd have to get that and look at it and bring an answer back to the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The point is that that act actually never made it through the House – it died on the order paper – and the changes that were suggested in the act were implemented through regulation, which were decided outside the debate of this Legislature.

### **Tabling of documentation**

In the interest of retroactive transparency and openness, will the minister table all the documentation related to the decision to exempt athletes – including, who was lobbying for the exemption, who was consulted, jurisdictional scans on similar exemptions, and what evidence to support, both the advisability and the legality of making these changes in regulation?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

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

I will certainly table anything that I am able to table, hon. member.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

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

I have to assume that the exemption regulations referred to by my leader here were requested specifically by the major junior hockey teams in response to the million dollar class action lawsuits that are currently before the courts.

### **Employment rights stripped from young athletes (further)**

A question to the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning: If the courts are in the process of determining whether or not these young athletes are employees, wouldn't it be more prudent to wait for the court's decision before you strip them of their rights?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

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

To answer the question – you're talking about court proceedings – well, we haven't had any court proceedings here in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Bell:** According to the CBC, the minister met with Randy Gumbley of the Canadian Hockey League Players' Association on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017. At that time, Gumbley said that after his meeting with the minister, he felt confident that the bill would not go any further. I guess on that score, he was correct, but I doubt that you told him at that time that the intent was that the bill would go forward in regulation instead.

Again, to the minister: How is this consistent with open and transparent government?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

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

I did, indeed, have a meeting with the individual and he misinterpreted any indication that I didn't indicate that we would do that at that point in time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I appreciate that for many young athletes the major junior hockey leagues are a necessary training ground for them to pursue their NHL hockey dreams, but without the players there would be no league. The crowds come to see these incredibly talented young players, and it strikes me as bizarre that everyone involved in the business from coaches, managers to the concession stand vendors and the Zamboni drivers are protected under employment standards, but not the people who actually play the game.

### **Employment standards for major league hockey players**

Minister: Will you commit to repealing these secretive exemption regulations that unfairly exploit these young athletes?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

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

I'll certainly look into it and take it under advisement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

In keeping with the theme of home care today my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness.

### **Rapid Response Unit locations**

Minister, there's concern that expanding the geographical boundaries for the Rapid Response Unit with Island EMS that they have one stationed in West Prince at the present time. With the expansion or the enhancement of the program, there's a possibility that it could result in the Tignish and area, in the case of an emergency, having that unit too far away, and then putting more pressure on the Tignish volunteer fire department.

Is that the case? Would that be possible?

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

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

Certainly, that is absolutely not the intention, hon. member. What is going on with the rapid response team is actually, it's an increase of two new vehicles. It's actually taking a five-day service to a seven-day service; and with the use of Island EMS' computer-assisted dispatch unit that they have, that computer system, their own GPS system and historical data. They will assign these vehicles in the best possible place.

It's certainly not to take away or mean that the fire departments will have to step up and do more work; hopefully, to the contrary where there's more vehicles to be able to assist other vehicles and overlap and overlay so that all Islanders are well served by this rapid response team, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **Effects of rapid response paramedics**

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

Minister: How are these changes going to affect the day-to-day activities of the rapid response paramedics, and with the increase in hours will be additional level 2 and level 3 paramedics hired, especially to help with the afterhours?

**Mr. LaVie:** No.

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

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

Although, as minister of health or department of health, we don't get into the hiring of Island EMS. They have indicated that to obtain the service they want under this rapid response team they will have to hire some new individuals, hon. member, yes.

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

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

### **Privatizing home care services**

Regards to these changes, there's a lot of speculation out there that home care may become privatized even more than it is, or as other jurisdictions in Canada already have in place. I want you to be clear: Is it the intent of your department or of government to privatize more of home care services here on PEI?

**Mr. Myers:** It's so honest (Indistinct)

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

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

Thanks for the question, hon. member.

I've done my upmost best to this point to assure home care workers that this is not a privatization of home care. It is not today, nor is it in the future privatization of home care. It's simply using another layer in combination with those that exist today, be it RNs, LPNs, RCWs, social workers, nutritionists, OTs, to just enhance the health outcomes for individuals staying at home so that that's where they stay longer.

We all know that we have an aging population, but our seniors are living longer. So, in the homes, where they want to be, with their family, surrounded by the love of the family, we want to do our upmost best to keep them there, as well, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

We're talking about home care here today –

**Speaker:** Excuse me; my mistake. I have to go to the hon. Member from Member from West Royalty-Springvale for a question. Sorry about that. Then, I'll get to you.

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

My question is to the Premier: Premier, the opposition repeatedly, in the past, has accused your government of subverting the interest of the Public Accounts committee.

**Chief of Staff conducting strategy meetings**

**Premier:** Do you have personal knowledge that your Chief of Staff, Robert Vessey, conducts strategy meetings with Liberal members of the committee before each meeting of Public Accounts to influence the outcomes of committee decisions?

**Some Honourable Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I do not have personal knowledge of that. But, let me say that our caucus, our members work as a team and we're proud of that, and indeed we call on, as a team, we call on what resources we have. I'm glad to say that we continue to work as a team.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Is your chief of staff directing the committee on your orders or is he acting alone?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Mr. Myers:** Boy, when they –

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker –

**Mr. Myers:** – fall apart they fall apart.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – as I said in response to the previous question, I'm sure that members on all sides of the House understand what it is to work as a party, to work as a team and to conduct ourselves accordingly. Indeed, that is what we do, and I'm happy to say that when it comes to committees, as leader, I do not make it my business to help committees what to do.

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

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

On January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017, your Chief of Staff, Robert Vessey, in a meeting with Liberal committee members and others on the second floor of the Coles building made the

following statement and I quote: The Premier wants e-gaming put behind him.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh! Oh!

**Mr. Dumville:** Premier: Did you give this instruction to your chief of staff or was he acting alone?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what happened to the preambles to those supplementary questions –

**Mr. Myers:** Oh (Indistinct)

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – but there was a long preamble there and some insinuations, of course, that I know nothing about or the factual base for it.

I will say again that our committee members, our caucus members work as a team and we are moving forward as a government and, indeed, I expect we will find, in this sitting that indeed e-gaming has been put behind us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. member –

**An Honourable Member:** No, keep going with that.

**Speaker:** – from Souris-Elmira.

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

We're talking a lot today about home care. What it's all about is the people, the people that use the home care and the people that deliver the home care.

### **Public consultations on changes to home care services**

My question is to the health minister: Did you consult actual Islanders who use home care services before you signed the Medavie deal?

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

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

As I stated earlier, I know full well the value of home care on Prince Edward Island. I have a vase experience within my own family on the usage of home care, home care providers, the great work that they do. When I look at these workers that are in here, and they know the lady that I am speaking of today. She could not be where she's living today at 97 years old without the great assistance from those that are in this room and then the overflow gallery.

The work that they do all across Prince Edward Island to keep Islanders at home – and you're right, hon. member. It is about the people. It's about those clients they serve. These folks are dedicated to the jobs they do. We just want to make that a better system for them, as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

Well over 4,500 Islanders use home care every year. That's a lot of firsthand experience from patients' perspective.

My question is to the health minister: Don't you think that patients' perspective should have been heard from before making any changes to home care?

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

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

I am aware of the vast number of Islanders that are serviced by home care. Would I anticipate seeing that rise? Absolutely, I would as we see our aging population, our seniors that are wanting to live at home. I'm sure that number will increase well above the 4,500. That is why we are using this federal bi-lateral health accord to enhance home care systems.

Year one, we're doing the rollout for that now, but we will be reassessing that in the following year to say: Is this the best process? Or just where the process has gotten to, and look for further advancements

in the area of other staff, other enhancements, other requirements in years two through 10.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

Out of 4,500, a lot of those are seniors.

### Consultations with senior groups

My question is to the minister of health: Did you talk to any senior groups across Prince Edward Island before you made your decision?

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

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

I guess since I have taken the chair, I've spoken to lots of seniors in Prince Edward Island that want to be able to have the best health care at home, in health care facilities. We look at the overall picture – and we know that there are a lot of families that are able to support those when they're at home, but there are a lot of families that aren't.

We're looking at another method that will allow those – especially the ones that have no other supports at home – to enable them to move home until the workers from the home care system are able to come in and take over their health care needs with a great transition from the three RNs that will be leading and coordinating from Health PEI.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

Health care services are being rolled back in rural communities right across Prince Edward Island, by this government it is. It makes home care services even more important to residents in communities like ours.

### Continuity of services

Question to the health minister: How will a continuity of services be kept for home care clients with these changes?

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

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

I, as others, hear from seniors on a recurring basis about the need to have to show up and go to ERs. It's difficult for them. Some, they don't drive. Some, they don't have any family. This new method of using advanced EMT paramedics to come into the homes to take care of those, what I will call, those basic needs that keep these seniors from having to go to ERs, from having to maybe try and find neighbours to get them there. It's a welcomed service and one that will be enhanced.

Anything that keeps them home is valuable, and even some of these clients that aren't part of the home care system now may become identified as those that do need the full service and then that's another opportunity for the health care providers that are in the room today to take on those urgent needs of those seniors all across Prince Edward Island.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

Well, home care clients build up a good relationship with their workers. They become familiar with each other. The home care workers learn about the needs of the patients. It's especially true with our seniors.

Question to the health minister: Did you consider the importance it'll have on seniors having new health care workers coming in and out of their home, disrupting continuity of their care?

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

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

If there's anything I learned since taking my chair as minister of health, I learned that through meetings with folks like that are sitting in the gallery today, the home care servers, they are probably the best advocates for the clients they serve. The information that they brought to me is so vital to how we can help to enhance some of the needs that

are before them today, with or without this program.

In the past, they have struggled with challenges before them and we're trying to find ways to open new methods of doing things that will definitely provide bridge systems for the client, but will make the roles of the health care provider that much better. They are great advocates for the clients they serve.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, this is your final question.

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

### **E-gaming put to bed and cancelled**

My next question is to the Premier: Premier, is it true that you wanted e-gaming put to bed and cancelled, covered up like Robert Vessey told Liberal committee members?

Is it true?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I think that we'll likely find that e-gaming will go to sleep by itself from repeated questions that we get in this House and indeed, the Auditor General put it to bed in her report, most recently recognizing that we have acted on all 15 of her recommendations and she was very positive about how we have dealt with her report on e-gaming.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** You're living in a different universe than the rest of us. That's your answer.

**Leader of the Opposition:** The only way it's going to go away is (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** It'll go away at the polls (Indistinct)

[End of Question Period]