



Session:	3/65
Date:	20 April 2018
No:	31

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

FRIDAY, 20 APRIL 2018



Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

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

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

Yesterday during Question Period in questions from the Member from Morell-Mermaid, I'd like to bring some corrections to some of the responses that I may have had yesterday in regards to some research that I did last night in regards to the Hope Air program. In actual fact, the flight program and the bus program does cover costs for an essential companion to go with the patient if required and when it comes to bus and ferry coverage, as well, there is no questions – or who may be in the vehicle as well. Just want to bring some clarity to those points that I made yesterday.

Thank you.

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

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

Just to be clear, I'm rising in my capacity as minister of justice and further to discussions on estimates here yesterday evening, the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira and Borden-Kinkora had raised questions about RCMP check stops. I'm happy to bring back that just on a preliminary check, in terms of reporting that we had had in our office in the month of March, there were at least five check stops conducted in rural areas of Prince Edward Island. In the area around Montague, there was one. In the area around Souris, there was one. In the area around O'Leary, there was a traffic initiative resulting in 20 summary offence tickets. The area around Tignish, there was one traffic initiative resulting in 23 summary offence tickets. At the community request in Borden, RCMP patrols and visible traffic enforcement were stepped up through the month of March.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Hon. minister, I just might add for everybody's information, questions coming from estimates should be responded to in estimates. Okay?

Thank you.

Questions by Members

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

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

I'm quite confident stating that many Islanders, if not all Islanders at one time or another, have had a stay in one of our hospital facilities here on PEI, or have had to visit a loved one that has an extended stay in hospital. The ability to stay connected with family and friends can help patients in our healthcare system feel less isolated as they go through sometimes lengthy stays.

**Access to WiFi at Island hospitals**

My first question is to the minister of health: How many Island hospitals currently have full access to public WiFi for patients and visitors alike?

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

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

To the best of my knowledge, I believe most hospitals have some WiFi coverage. It may not be in all rooms, but for the most part there is some WiFi coverage. I do understand and realize based on some recent conversations with the foundation at PCH, there are issues there with WiFi. They've been looking to have that installed for some time.

We're looking into that and hopefully we can resolve that in the very near future. Obviously we know that there's great need for people to be in touch and when they're with their family to be able to utilize those services. So, we are looking into that matter at the PCH to try to deal with it in the very near future.

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

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

Two years ago, government piloted limited public WiFi access at the QEH and the Souris Hospital. I might add, I'd like to personally thank the Lions Club in Souris for helping to fund that.

**Mr. LaVie:** Great organization.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Mr. Speaker, government then committed to have full public WiFi access in all Island hospitals in the coming months.

Question to the minister of health: Why wasn't this commitment met?

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

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

Certainly we worked with groups associated with hospitals, whether it's foundations, whether it's other service groups in areas where hospitals are, to work collaboratively on approaches when it comes to areas such as WiFi. We will continue to do that in the future. In today's needs, people need to be connected online and we certainly want to support that when we can.

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

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

Again I go back; it was just two long years ago that this government – the then health minister – made the statement that this would be forthcoming in short order. It would be completed within months.

### **Government tender and successful bidder**

Question to the minister of health: Did government tender for this work, and if so, who was the successful bidder?

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

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

I don't have at my fingertips any of that information on tendering or who may have won those. I know from conversations with

the Prince County Hospital Foundation, their discussions, primarily, have been with Eastlink, but I don't believe that there's any specific course that we have to take in regards to this. We should be talking to all vendors, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

In fact, there were no tenders issued. There was no work done. Since government publicly announced this project, again, over two long years ago, you'd hope that the project costs, at the very least, would have been nailed down.

### **Cost for free WiFi to Island hospitals**

Question to the minister of health: What will it cost to install free public WiFi access to all Island hospitals?

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

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

Again, I certainly don't have that information, but based on a conversation I had earlier this week with my deputy, those investigations have begun. We will be looking at what the possibilities are for providing this service. Obviously, there are costs associated and it will take some time to get those numbers together. We are on track and working on that, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I think everyone in this House would agree with me, or anybody tuning in, as well, that you can pretty much go into any restaurant or coffee shop across PEI, except, maybe, in some of the rural areas, and have access to WiFi. It just is confusing to me why this government would make this announcement well over two years ago, yet, no work has been done.

Question again, to the minister: When will

free public WiFi access be available for use by patients, and visitors at all Island hospitals as promised by your government?

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

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

We will certainly put full effort on this issue. It has been brought to me, my attention by various groups associated with hospitals. It's a concern that needs to be addressed. We will do our full due diligence on this issue. We will get some pricing. We will figure out some issues that need to be resolved. Obviously, there are some infrastructure needs in facilities and ways to maneuver cabling and things like that. We'll be looking at all those points, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Since 2011, the province has been paying \$40,000 a year in leasing costs for a health clinic in Murray River. The only problem is there is no health clinic in Murray River.

#### **Leasing costs for non-existent health clinic in Murray River**

Why are the taxpayers paying lease costs for a non-existent health clinic in Murray River, hon. minister of health?

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

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

Certainly, in the past, we did offer a clinic in the Murray River area. Obviously, we were pleased and proud to provide that service in that area. However, the uptake was not that great. It wasn't as it was expected, and apparently a lot of the residents preferred to travel to Montague for their health needs. That building or that facility is not used as a clinic today, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Minister, they might prefer to go to Montague, but there were no doctors in Montague for them. The health clinic that I talk about was to be staffed by a nurse practitioner. It was first promised by this government in the 2010 throne speech. Government signed the clinic lease in 2011 at \$40,000 a year.

Question to the health minister: How long is this lease for, and can we expect a health clinic there before the lease expires?

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

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

Certainly, when you take on contractual obligations such as a building like this, you do have to fulfill the contract that you signed, too.

Obviously, if there is need in the area. If residents in the area would like to revisit the possibility of a clinic being put back in that area, certainly, that's something that we would be happy to speak with them about, and look if that's an opportunity.

Obviously, I've been to my feet on many occasions over the last several weeks talking about the Kings County area as a region. We are looking at ways and means of providing that medical service, the good health care service to the people of that Kings County region. If that's an option in the future, certainly, we'd be pleased to look at that, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I'd just like to clarify; there was never a clinic there, so you're not putting it back. It's now 2018, and the residents of Murray River still don't have a health clinic that they were promised eight years ago by this government.

#### **Delay in keeping promise for clinic**

What's the delay in keeping this eight-year promise, the eight-year election promise to the residents of Murray River?

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

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

Certainly, we want to provide the absolute best health care to Islanders, no matter whether it's in Murray River, whether it's in Souris, whether it's in O'Leary, Alberton or Tignish.

When we're looking at areas, we want to be able to provide the coverage, and the physician coverage, as well. Obviously, if any physician would like to go and set-up practice there, we would strongly encourage that. If a nurse practitioner would like to be part of that collaborative approach out of that facility, we would certainly support that, as well.

We will continue to look in that area, all areas of Kings County, to see how we can meet the full needs of every citizen from that region, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The government talked earlier in this House sitting about a full complement of doctors in Montague, but we know that doesn't mean everyone in Kings County has a doctor.

We know the patient registry is a mess. I've talked about it in the House before about some of those patients being told don't get on the patient registry because we have a separate list.

Question to the health minister: Are you committed to keeping this government's eight-year-old promise for a health clinic in Murray River?

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

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

I'd like to assure the hon. member that, as my mandate as minister of health, I am very focused on providing the best possible health care services to all Islanders, no matter where they live on Prince Edward Island.

Obviously, when we talk about the Kings County area and the full complement of doctors there, that's very uplifting for that region. It's keeping the ER open. It's keeping it sustainable. But, from time to time doctors do need some time off, and those things vary as time moves out.

We know that there's another nurse practitioner that we're looking at to go to that area. I think we're trying to improve the situation there to the best of our ability and will continue to do that into the future, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Last week, the Leader of the Opposition brought up the pressures on the Kings County Memorial Hospital emergency room. He noted there are no evening walk-in clinics in Kings County and no walk-in clinics, at all, in the Montague area.

#### **Pressure on doctors and nurses at KCMH**

Question to the health minister: If the health clinic in Murray River was open, wouldn't that help alleviate some of the pressure of those doctors and nurses in the emergency room in Montague?

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

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

Certainly, I do know that there are patients that are looking for doctors. Any citizens on Prince Edward Island, any Islander that does not have a doctor, I do encourage them to register on the patient registry.

When I was speaking, last week, I made reference to our recruitment and retention team that are working hard to recruit doctors, find doctors to come to Prince Edward Island to work in all areas of Prince Edward Island. Rural areas are a little harder to recruit for, but we are looking for doctors to go to West Prince, to go to Kings County

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) seven years no.

**Mr. Mitchell:** – to go to east Prince, to go to Charlottetown area because we have work for all of them, and we like to encourage them to come to Prince Edward Island.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) private sector (Indistinct)

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

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

There's a full complement of doctors in Montague now. That's what we're told. If the Murray River health clinic was open and staffed by a nurse care practitioner aligned with the doctors for the people of Southern Kings to access care closer to home, wouldn't that lower the pressure on the emergency room?

#### **Commitment to open clinic in Murray River**

If you're already paying for the space, let's be fiscally responsible and let's finish the job and open the health care in Murray River. Will you commit to that, minister?

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

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

Earlier week, or perhaps it was the end of last week, I did commit to looking at walk-in clinics in that Kings county area. I have discussions started within the department on that to look at that possibility.

I assume that they, probably haven't, as it's early days, they haven't reached out to the doctors to see how they could play a role, or the nurse practitioners in the area, for that matter, how they could play a role.

It is a commitment that I made to look at that, walk-in clinics in that Kings County region. As I said to the hon. member, if there's an appetite for that in that region and the residents feel they could go to that area for service. Certainly, that would be in – the places that we would look, Mr. Speaker.

**Leader of the Opposition:** There's more than an appetite, there's a need.

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

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

When government tried to engineer school closures last year, it said it was using an arms-length body to run a fair and transparent process. We all know what the actual facts were when it was said and done.

Now, it seems government is dusting off that old playbook when it comes to forced amalgamation that's on their agenda.

#### **Final say on amalgamation decisions**

Question to the communities' minister: Who has the final say on your forced amalgamation, you guys or IRAC?

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

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

That's a good question, and it's a question that's laid out in *Municipalities Act*, but I want to thank the member from the Georgetown area for his commitment and his work for his constituents down there. It's good that he has his constituents involved and they are well informed of the process that's in place because of him.

As the act outlines, IRAC will conduct public meetings over the next month or two. There is an opportunity for a mediator to be hired and to look into different ways to do things. They will make a decision, and that will come to me and I will forward that decision, the IRAC decision, onto the Cabinet to make the final decision.

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

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

So, IRAC doesn't have any decision-making power. They are a recommendation body, so they'll make a recommendation and it's not a decision. Cabinet actually has the complete and final say in the Three Rivers forced amalgamation. It was the *Municipalities Act* that this government brought in and that the third party voted for that put us in this predicament.

**Forced amalgamation on Three Rivers**

Question to the minister: Is mirroring the flawed school closure plan the best way for your government to get what it wants, that is a forced amalgamation in Three Rivers?

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

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

The government is committed to strong communities right across Prince Edward Island. If we have strong communities across Prince Edward Island with local representation, local involvement, that will make Prince Edward Island a better place for all Islanders.

Our government has been working extremely hard to make Prince Edward Island the mighty Island it is. We are mighty. We are small, but we are mighty, and we're mighty because we have community groups and community people all throughout Prince Edward Island working together to make Prince Edward Island better. That's what this process is all about; making Prince Edward Island a mighty Island which is better for every Islander on Prince Edward Island.

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

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

Members of this House will remember when the bill was on the floor, there was a lot of objection from the official opposition about the amount of power it was giving the minister and Cabinet and how little power it actually gave the residents of Prince Edward Island.

The government voted for it anyways. The third party voted for it anyways, and the third party has had three different positions on it since that, but that's besides the points.

**IRAC a recommending body in amalgamation**

Why do you think using IRAC as a front to advance your government's amalgamation agenda is a path that Islanders want you to follow?

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

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

I have respect for IRAC. IRAC is an independent body, non-partisan, contrary to some opinions. They work on behalf of all Islanders. IRAC controls fuel prices on Prince Edward Island, allowing Islanders to be known of a monthly adjustment. They smooth out the fuel prices. They listen to rental concerns. They listen to appeals. They take care of our land management, our *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.*, protecting Islanders' rights to the property here in Prince Edward Island.

I think IRAC is the best place to do this, instead of on the floor of this Legislature, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

One might argue that IRAC isn't doing a great job in controlling the gas prices or following the monthly adjustments either. Gas is adjusting here all the time, and as I had said previous, they are a recommending body when it comes to this – and it's prescribed in the legislation that they are only to provide a recommendation, which means that the ultimate decision gets made at Cabinet, which is the way you guys wanted it and it's the way the Green Party wanted it.

After the contentious Public Schools Branch battle last year to close several schools, the public backlash came within 24 hours and your Cabinet reversed the decision.

**Forced amalgamation on Three Rivers (further)**

Question to the minister: If IRAC were to recommend a forced amalgamation for Three Rivers, what's to stop Cabinet from ignoring it anyways and just making your own decision?

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

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

The hon. member has mentioned the word 'power' a number of times. The process that has been outlined in the *Municipal Government Act* returns – gives the power to the people of the area.

IRAC now has posted it on its website, has made advertisements in the paper. The process is online. There will be public hearings and public consultations. There are all kinds of opportunity for the people of the Three Rivers area to make comments, for municipalities in the area to make comments. This act, this process, has empowered the people of the area and it is a good process that the people are front and centre in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

So, as the hon. member across would know, there's been very little opportunity for the public in Three Rivers to have their input. It's been very shielded and quiet because the people who were organizing knew at the end of the day that the minister was going to have the full power, because that's what the Liberals wanted and that's what the Green Party wanted. They didn't want people to have a say. They wanted all the decisions to be made at a Cabinet table in Charlottetown. That's the Green Party way and that's the Liberal way.

### **IRAC in no-win situation**

Question to the minister: Aren't you putting IRAC in a no-win situation on forced amalgamation, just like you did to the Public Schools Branch on school closures?

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, the process that has been outlined in the *Municipal Government Act* empowers all Prince Edward Islanders to get involved in their communities and making Prince Edward Island a better place to live, work and play, and raise a family.

This government is committed to putting more effort on a bigger population here on Prince Edward Island and this government has worked extremely hard to move that population into the rural area because we know strong communities right across Prince Edward Island make a strong province. A strong province is good for the families of Prince Edward Island, the people of Prince Edward Island, and we're committed to making a strong Island for all Islanders right across Prince Edward Island.

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

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

I think government needs to be straight up with the people in the Three Rivers area what their plans are. I've been very consistent on where I stand on this. I'm against amalgamation. I'm against forced amalgamation. If the people of the area vote for it, then I support democracy. I'm not like the Liberal party who wants all of the decisions made in Charlottetown, and I'm not like Liberal light party over here who wants their cake and eat it too.

### **Forced amalgamation in Three Rivers (further)**

Question to the minister: Isn't it high time you level with Islanders about your government's forced amalgamation and what the plan really is?

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

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

We have to understand that this process started from a community-based group down in the Three Rivers area. A number of well-minded, well-thoughtful Islanders that wanted to make Prince Edward Island a better place; came together in a cooperative, volunteer way to think of ideas of how they can make their community, their area, their place on Prince Edward Island, a better place for them.

Discussions have been going on now for close to three years in this area. Representatives from each community have been on this committee; representatives

from the unincorporated area have been on this committee. They put together a plan for their area, for their future, for their families. I think we owe it to this group to allow them the opportunity to present their case in front of IRAC and for the other groups in the area to present their case in front of IRAC, and to have IRAC come back with a recommendation to Cabinet.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** Good job.

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

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

In the recent Budget press release, we heard that nearly \$1 million in new funding for community partners was invested above and beyond annual commitments in 2017-2018 to empower Islanders and connect them to jobs.

The press conference announcing this funding was about supporting great PEI community groups and responding to the #MeToo movement, yet the Budget press documents have it under the heading of Jobs Funding for Communities.

### **Funding for community partners**

A question to the Minister of Family and Human Services: How were these projects selected, and how will Islanders know how the spending has been effective?

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

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

Over here, we believe that every Islander deserves the opportunity to have a rich, fulfilling and successful life. We design programs and services around helping those Islanders do just that.

Last year was a very strong year economically for Prince Edward Island and we ended up with a surplus. We had some year-end funding. We have been working side-by-side with our community partners throughout the year. We're on a constant basis in touch with them because they know

their clients, so we had been working on projects with them already.

So when we had this money come to us and we were told to reach out, we reached out to those NGOs and those community partners that had valid, worthwhile projects that were going to make a huge impact in Island communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

So unfortunately, we still don't know how they were selected, but I'd agree that having this money going into the community is a fantastic opportunity to see money going to great projects and to great organizations. The challenge is that this funding is a one-year grant as confirmed by your representative from your department.

What will happen to these important initiatives and the associated jobs when the project funding of one year is completed?

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

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

Again, we value our community partners and we work very, very closely with them. Every year, when it comes to budget time, we sit down with them and we review their budgets with them – what their needs are. How can we help make their lives easier so that they can, indeed, help Islanders' lives?

You could ask the community partners that we did support and some of those that were there at that press conference, they didn't receive any funding, but they were there to support the organizations that did because they know that when we work together, we all thrive.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Minister for community NGOs and funding needs**

Community group project funds, especially when they are for one-time projects, are allocated to a generic grant line in various departments, which makes reporting and tracking them really challenging. Given that this is being recognized as something of economic importance and job creation and that there is an economic impact and value of the community sector, isn't it time that we have a single point of responsibility, maybe a minister, for community NGOs and their funding needs?

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

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

I think that each individual department and each individual minister knows the needs and they work closely with their community partners on what their needs are. To have one person to try and stretch them across the various, various needs, I think wouldn't be a good idea.

We are working closely with our NGOs, closely with our community partners, closely with the families and the clients that are impacted by the services that they provide and we will continue to work closely with those community partners.

Actually, I'm having a sit-down next week in Hunter River with our community partners to see how we can move forward and make sure that they have sustainable funding that they know year-after-year.

Thank you.

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

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

This morning my question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Minister, the Port of Charlottetown, the City of Charlottetown, and tourism operators all across our Island are waiting with anticipation so that we can shower our

visitors to the first cruise ship on May 2<sup>nd</sup> with true Island hospitality.

**Cruise ship numbers and economic impact**

**Minister:** How many cruise ships are expected this year in the Port of Charlottetown, how many visitors can we expect, and what is the economic impact?

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

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

I'm proud to talk about our tourism industry and the 7,700 full-time equivalents that are employed here on PEI in that sector and the \$450 million that comes in each year in revenues. 2017 was a record year in the cruise ship industry and 2018 is forecast to be another record year. We're expecting 92 ships and 117,000 visitors to come to the Port of Charlottetown this year with an economic impact of almost \$20 million.

So, we know that cruise ships play a very important role in the economy of PEI and an additional investment that this government has made into tourism is a \$3.5 million injection into the cultural action plan to make PEI an even better destination.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Minister, I'm thrilled to hear 117,000 visitors will get to experience our wonderful and true Island hospitality. I know that tourism is so important to our economy. Last year there were some concerns about the North Atlantic right whale.

**Protection of North Atlantic right whale and cruise ships**

What are we doing to protect the whales, while at the same time encouraging cruise ships to continue to stop at the Port of Charlottetown?

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

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

As I said, 7,700 full-time equivalent positions on PEI with almost \$400 million in revenue, that's very important to PEI. We have worked with our provincial counterparts, our federal counterparts, and the fishers in PEI to make sure that the right whales are protected and that the cruise ships will be able to travel through there as well. So, we take it very seriously and we're very proud of the fishers in PEI as well that have made adjustments to their gear to make sure that the right whales are protected.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

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

My question today is to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy. As we know, there's a new building construction taking place in Montague with respect to the manor. The ground has been broken; the construction is underway, hopefully meaning that sometime in the near future the manor will be completed.

#### **Completion date of new manor in Montague**

Minister: When will the construction of the new manor in Montague be completed?

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

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

Our government has been committed to ensuring that long-term care is a priority for our government. In fact, in this Budget, we've committed to 50 more long-term care beds this year, 50 next year. We have replaced, since 2009, six of the manors – up to \$60 million spent there. In 2015, we made an announcement and a commitment that we would move forward with the Riverview Manor and Tyne Valley Manor – another \$22 million investment. Things are on schedule in Montague and we're looking forward to the completion of that in the coming years.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, your first supplementary.

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

I've heard from a lot of residents from Montague with respect to the manor and I'm wondering if the department had made any adjustments or changes to the way the manor was built with respect to having a look at Souris. I understand that maybe some staff went to Souris and met with some of the residents of the manor, the staff at the manor, and actually families of residents.

#### **Adjustments and design of new manor**

I'm wondering was there any adjustments made with respect to the design of the new manor that's being built in Montague.

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

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

As I mentioned, the manor construction in Riverview and Tyne Valley, for that matter, are both on schedule. Riverview's will be completed next year. We did work with the staff there in looking at the design. Is there something that might work better for staff within the scope of the plan? We had consultation with them. We made some adjustments that they felt would be more effective in the comfort of their staff and their residents. We're very happy to have done that.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, your second supplementary.

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly, again, have been hearing a lot from the residents of Montague and the Riverview Manor was named the Riverview Manor because at the time when it was initially built, there was a view of the river. Where the new manor's being constructed, certainly there's no view of the river where it is.

#### **Renaming of new manor in Montague**

Is there any thought to renaming the new manor?

**Mr. R. Brown:** Al Roach.

**An Hon. Member:** Al Roach Manor.

**An Hon. Member:** Al Roach Memorial.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Roach view.

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

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

We do expect that residents will be able to move in there in February of 2019. I know the one in Tyne Valley, Stewart Memorial manor. They're going through a process with engaging community to come up with a new name. We're moving a bit of a location, the same as the Riverview Manor is moving.

I think that's a great idea to engage the residents in there at the present time, engage staff and engage community. If they want to put forward some new names, that's something we certainly will entertain.

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

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

There has been a lot of interest in my district around access to the jetty at the former SCI fabrication yard for local anglers.

#### **Access to jetty at former SCI yard for anglers**

Question to the economic development minister: What progress has been made on resolving this issue?

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

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

I have heard from a number of residents in the area about the jetty, and we did have people take a look at it. I was onsite myself, personally, with some members of the area. We took a lot at it with safety in mind. That's my largest concern.

I'm actually from Borden. I lived there when I was a kid. A lot of the people that would use the jetty –

**Mr. LaVie:** Never grew up, yet.

**Mr. Palmer:** – would be my friends and family. I want to make sure that they're safe. There are some dangerous areas in there that we need to address. We know, in fact, even a year or so ago, a car went over the side. We have to very careful to make sure everyone is safe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Let's be clear, the car didn't go over the side of the jetty. The car went off the side of the ground itself.

Last fall, government sealed off access to the jetty citing safety and liability concerns. Local anglers have fished off this jetty for years.

Question to the development minister: This should be a simple fix, and shouldn't have dragged on for months. When will local Islanders, local residents and tourists be able to go back to this jetty and fish?

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to continue to look at the jetty and make sure that it's safe for the residents of the area.

I know I've been approached by a number of people from the community. I just heard from the member, probably, a few short weeks ago. I have visited myself onsite. I think we've been moving very quickly to make sure that Islanders are safe. That's very important to me and I will not open the jetty if it is not safe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

This was the minister that, last night, changed how we're going to look at loans

going forward, so this should be a simple fix.

In 2009, government bought the old fabrication yard for \$350,000. Nine years later, there has been no environmental cleanup. There has been no redevelopment. And industrial waste is becoming unearthed across the site.

**Mr. LaVie:** Shame.

### State of fabrication yard

**Mr. Fox:** Question to the minister: Why has government let this property stay in this state?

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Mr. Speaker, this property in Borden is a strategic asset in PEI. It is a wonderful facility and there are lots of potential uses for it. We're continuing to make sure that it is safe so no one gets hurt there.

As soon as that is – that we're able to put measures in place, that people will be safe, we can have that jetty open. We will – we are about action. We'll get that done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Fox:** Mr. Speaker, this is such a strategic asset that they won't let nobody touch it after 20 years.

In 2015, government said that changes to the property were coming. In 2016, government issued a tender to remove the concrete columns and these columns are still there. In 2017, government said the cost to remove the columns would be between \$2 million and \$3 million.

**Timeline for fabrication yard cleanup**  
Question to the minister: In what year –

**Mr. LaVie:** Cut the tag off.

**Mr. Fox:** – will this site be cleaned up?

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Mr. Speaker, we continue to be concerned about the –

**Mr. LaVie:** Election coming.

**Mr. Palmer:** – safety in the area and that is going to be my number one priority.

**Mr. LaVie:** Election coming.

**Mr. Palmer:** The second piece of that is the strategic asset that we have in Borden and we want to make sure that that is safe to be used. Before, we let residents down there, and we don't want to have a repeat as the hon. member had suggested of the car going over the side of the bank. I know that there has been cars that have gotten caught up in the cement in the middle. We have to make sure that it's safe for everyone and that we are doing everything we can to protect the residents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

This minister is now the fourth minister in this government's term to sit in the chair. In that chair, since the government bought the yard almost a decade ago.

### Access to jetty at former SCI yard for anglers (further)

Question to the minister: You have a chance. You can be the minister to do what your predecessors couldn't get done. Will you get this job done so that the property can be re-developed and people can go back to fishing?

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** (Indistinct) fishing there.

**Mr. Palmer:** Mr. Speaker, this department has done a lot of things to help with strategic assets across PEI that are being underutilized. The Georgetown Shipyard, as an example, has been revitalized.

**An Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Mr. Myers:** Has it?

**Mr. Palmer:** We're working to revitalize the jetty in Borden. We're working –

**Mr. LaVie:** You shut it down.

**Mr. Palmer:** – to – right across PEI to continue to leverage the strategic assets we have. We're going to continue to do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Myers:** I can't wait to go down –

**Speaker:** Order!

**Mr. Myers:** – on a tour. It's exciting.

**Speaker:** Order!

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) timber yard on your way along (Indistinct)

**Mr. R. Brown:** You go down there and try your car on that one.

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

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

Let's hope you get this done.

Last night, in budget estimates we came to find out that emails from chief conservation officers have flowed right up into the department of justice and right into the Premier's office, to the clerk of the Legislative Council, or, pardon me, the Executive Council, and also into the chief of staff's.

#### **Emails from chief conservation officers**

Will the minister have this matter investigated to ensure that the senior branch of government is not interfering with justice and how it is operated in this province?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to let this Chamber know that the hon. Premier was the minister of justice at the time. We need to not lost sight of what it is that we're talking about.

I looked at the email that the hon. member tabled yesterday evening. That email was sent after a charge had been laid. At that point in time, after that's been done, it becomes public information. There are numerous, or these two, government departments that work on the prosecution of these offences, and conservation officers, which fall under justice and public safety investigate them. And communities, land and environment officials do the scientific parts of it.

Over the course of the last couple of decades, we've come to a point where we find that it's beneficial and in the public interest to report on those investigations and their findings. This is all part of it. It ensures confidence in the farming practices within the community, and it ensures confidence in our stewardship of the environment and our waterways.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[End of Question Period]