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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

TUESDAY, 1 MAY 2018

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Last night marked the ninth temporary closure of the Kings County Memorial Hospital emergency room, this is since just December.

Closures at KCMH emergency room

Question to the minister of health: What is your government doing to deal with this ongoing problem?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the minister responsible for health on Prince Edward Island, I take my role very seriously to try to ensure that health care is available for Islanders in the communities where they live as we can best provide it.

Obviously, yesterday down in Kings County the doctor that was working the emergency room service was unable to fulfill their shift. We did have to close the ER there from 3:00 p.m. onwards.

When this occurs, and sometimes it's on very short notice, we do our absolute best to inform the mayor of the Montague area and the residents of the Montague area with a public service announcement. We do that immediately.

Unfortunately, yesterday's case was fairly late notice, but we did our absolute best, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

When I raised this issue earlier this session I noted that there's no walk-in clinic in Montague. There are no evening walk-in

clinics in all of Kings County. Left unchecked, this situation will increase the risk of burnout for the doctors and the nurses that we do have.

Addressing risk to health professionals at KCMH (further)

Question to the minister of health: What, if anything, has been done to address any of these things?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, when we speak of ER coverage in the Kings County area, we are very fortunate that we now have a full complement of doctors in that area, which means that the rotation is a one-in-eight week rotation for those doctors in that region. But, from time to time doctors find themselves needing the time off and coverage is, sometimes, not able to be found.

Therefore, we find ourselves in situations such as yesterday, but we are looking at all areas for improving and enhancing the system in that area, be it walk-in clinics, be it different rotations of doctors, or even incorporate nurse practitioners. We will be holding meetings continuously on that.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Quite often, the easiest solution is to actually sit down and talk to the frontline workers. In fact, the frontline health workers at Kings County Memorial Hospital have come up with innovative ideas to improve things for patients and reduce the risk of staff burnout.

Question to the minister of health: Is Health PEI moving forward with any of the ideas from the frontline workers, and if so how fast will you take action?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, there are suggestions being brought forward. We are collecting those. We are looking at all options. We currently have a meeting set for Montague region on May 18th, for meetings with the mayor, some councillors from the area, some doctors from the area, and I'm sure other frontline folks will be in the room, as well.

We'll have a good opportunity to sit down and talk about other areas that we can look in. As I said earlier, there are several that we are collecting information on. Hopefully, we can find a good resolve for, not only the health care professionals, but for Islanders from the region that need access to doctors and nurses when they need it, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

We hear time and time again how hard it is to retain health care professionals here on PEI. What we're not hearing is a plan to actually work alongside our health care workers to come up with a solution so that we're not burning them out.

We also know that it's hard to recruit doctors here on PEI, as it is in many other jurisdictions. The doctors working at the Kings County Memorial Hospital emergency room are regularly putting in shifts of 12 hours or more. That's on top of their family practices.

Question to the minister of health: Is working our health care professionals to the bone this government's plan for our health care workers?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said earlier we are looking at all options, including the hours that the doctors in the region work. Obviously, as I said, we have a full complement there, now, which means it's a one-in-eight week rotation. We're hoping that the doctors and ourselves and the community can work together to find a reasonable solution here.

It is very important that access is available in each of our communities across Prince Edward Island and we want to have a positive outcome for the Kings County area, and, in particular, all other areas of Prince Edward Island, as well.

Currently, I was informed today that we have – our search probably will allow for a couple of new doctors to be coming to Prince Edward Island in the very near future, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

That's interesting that he's going to announce a couple of new doctors. A couple means two. Right now, I'm aware of four doctors impending departure from PEI, so his two new, and the four departing it only puts us further behind.

Delays in dealing with this problem are not improving access to health care for the residents of Kings County. It's making it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain health care professionals.

Health care crisis in rural PEI

Question to the minister of health: Do you agree that the current approach with our health care workers is pushing us closer and close to a health care crisis on PEI, particularly rural PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

As I said, I'm very pleased that the recruitment and retention folks are out working very diligently to try to attract new doctors to our region. When I say our region, I'll say Prince Edward Island. They have identified a few new doctors that are willing to come to Prince Edward Island and that's a very positive thing.

We will, very soon have seven new nurse practitioners spanning out across Prince Edward Island to handle other needs of our

vulnerable Islanders that need medical access. I can guarantee you; we will continue to work daily upon trying to attract new doctors, especially to rural regions of our wonderful province, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This week South Shore residents were dealt another blow in their ability to access a family doctor.

Access of doctor to South Shore residents

Question to the health minister: When did you first learn that Dr. Giordani is leaving his family practice at the end of July?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've had the opportunity to meet with residents from the Crapaud area. Actually, I'm meeting with them on Friday, as well, again.

There has been a doctor in that community for over 100, 150 years, almost, I believe. I definitely see the concern that the folks in that region have.

We will continue to work with doctors and nurse practitioners to alleviate the medical needs in that area. We will continue our conversations, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, Dr. Giordani took over his family practice about 2,300 patients in Crapaud when Dr. Visser retired in July, 2017. In January, Dr. Giordani relocated his practice to Cornwall; now, he'll be leaving on July 31st.

Contingency plan for South Shore residents

Question to the health minister: What contingencies are in place for the up to 2,300 South Shore residents, who will soon be without a family doctor, again?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe Dr. Giordani is doing some locum work in the west end of the province. We're very fortunate to have him cover those needs that we have there. I don't have indication that he is leaving at the end of July or the end of June. I'll have to go back and check into that.

Certainly, the health, well-being for Islanders in every region of the province is of utmost concern to myself, to the department, and to this government and we'll continue to work on regions to ensure that their health needs are met in a timely fashion.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Well maybe the minister should take a drive to Cornwall and see the guy's office where the poster says he's leaving on July 31st.

So now we've gone from a new doctor arriving last July, to relocating to another community in January, to leaving the province all together this July. Now up to 2,300 South Shore residents are going to be on the lurch without a family doctor. There's also another 500 in the area already on the patient registry.

Names added to patient registry

Question to the health minister: Will government be encouraging these Islanders to put their names on the patient registry, or will they be told to wait and see what happened up in West Prince.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly Islanders –

Mr. LaVie: On the ropes.

Mr. Mitchell: – have every right and every ability to add their names to the patient registry and actually any that aren't on the patient registry; I do encourage Islanders to get their names listed on there. Obviously, when we are able to attract physicians, we do collect names from that patient registry. If there are full patient panels that exist today, that's a good transition, so we will work off the registry and off panels that exist today and any new doctors that come forward to provide that service on Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, rural PEI has no faith in the patient registry. The community has sprung into action in response, focusing on short and long-term solutions. A walk in clinic is offered a couple of days a week, depending on the availability of doctors. The walk in clinics are heavily used by area residents and could easily be expanded to meet the demand.

Nurse practitioner for walk in clinic

Question to the health minister: The community has asked for a nurse practitioner three days a week that could work through the walk in clinics. With the new developments, will government act on this request?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said earlier, I'll be meeting with representatives from that community on Friday and I expect that will be the main focus of our conversation. I've indicated to them that a nurse practitioner for the area is something that we are looking at from the department level to see if we can do that service.

Obviously we have other communities in the area that we're working with: the area of Borden, the area of Kinkora, the area of Crapaud and if we can make something a workable solution there, that's exactly what we're trying to do, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Well it's very, very plain to see that the community's actually being very proactive. The community has a long-term vision – it's for a medical centre that serves the area with walk in and night clinics – related health services and a staff by combination of a doctor, nurse practitioners, and other health professionals working together in a collaborative approach.

Improvement of access to health care

Question to the health minister: What is government prepared to do to make the community vision a reality to improve local access to health care in the South Shore area?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Again, that has been the conversation that we've had previously and I anticipate that'll be the conversation that we have on Friday.

I am working with the community; I am working with the department to find a reasonable solution for those residents from that area who for years had a doctor right in the community and if we could come back to that type of service, I would gladly do that. But in the meantime, we have other needs that we have to address as far as nurse practitioners, maybe, for the area, working collectively with other areas and that's the work that's going on and we will continue to work very closely with them on that.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The community has gone so far as to look at recruiting their own replacement as many communities around the region have done. Previously, government said that there were no available billing numbers for the area. That status will change in July when Dr. Giordani leaves.

Vacant billing number available for use

Question to the health minister: If the community were able to recruit a new doctor themselves, would that soon-be-vacant billing number be made available for their use?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, if the community was able to recruit a doctor for that area, we would absolutely sit down and have that conversation. We are actively recruiting doctors for all regions of Prince Edward Island and if the community is able to find one on their own, I'd be more than happy to sit down and have discussions with them on that.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Approval of loan for new Hampton Inn

Question to the Premier: Has your Cabinet approved a loan to build the new Hampton Inn which will bring in a new 125 rooms and over 50 jobs to the North River area?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of any loans through the province at this point in time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Approval of loan/existing hotel in Summerside

Question to the Premier: Did your Cabinet recently approve a loan to take over an existing hotel in Summerside?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tourism has grown by 6.5% in the Province of Prince Edward Island and I'm glad the hon. member uses the word 'loans' because last week he was using the words 'giving money away'. We have hard-earning Islanders – in fact in his own district, we've got over \$30 million in loans out to companies in his own district, but he tends to float around the province and pick out individuals or companies that he doesn't think that desire loans from our province that are creating employment, creating awareness for our province's marketing, using – if you're talking about a Hampton Inn, that's wonderful because every time someone puts a flag in a property, that's a marketing tool for PEI.
Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to know that the minister's watching me so closely, and my patterns, and where I'm traveling, and who I'm talking about. It must mean that I'm doing something that's getting under his skin, or maybe getting under all your skin.

Hotel owner in Summerside

Question again to the Premier: Who owns the company that was loaned the money to buy the hotel in Summerside?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We were lucky enough to be able to approve a loan to a company in Summerside that is buying a hotel there and they're going to revitalize that. We're very excited about that in Summerside because we know that will add to the great product line that we already have there and we look forward to the renovations being completed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question again to the Premier: Does the individual who you loaned the money to buy the hotel in Summerside have any particular connection to the individual who ran your leadership campaign?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, we're really excited that we're able to have additional investments into Summerside and we know that tourism is a very important part of our community. There are 7,700 full-time equivalent jobs in PEI and we've had over one million overnight stays. So we're very glad that we can have investments into the community and we'll support entrepreneurs as much as we can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Standard practice re: registration of company

Question to the Premier: Is it standard practice for somebody to register a company and only 72 days later receive a \$4 million loan from your government, or does it only apply to people who are related to someone who ran your leadership campaign?

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

Mr. Palmer: Again, I'm very excited that entrepreneurs in PEI are able to quickly respond to market needs, so they find an opportunity and they work really hard to seize on that and I think the investment coming into Summerside is very welcome and I know it's only going to strengthen our tourism product there and I'm very proud to continue to support entrepreneurs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

All I'm trying to figure out is if this person who received the loan, if he has some direct connection to the Premier, which I know he does. His father ran the Premier's leadership campaign. In a recent media interview, the new owner of the hotel says he bought it for \$2.9 million and plans to renovate it to the tune of \$1.2 million. The liberal lending machine approved him at \$4 million for a loan.

Taxpayers' dollars to purchase and redevelop hotel

Question to the Premier: Do you think it's fair that taxpayers have to fund the entire purchase and redevelopment of this hotel?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud that our government is able to provide loans to up to \$355 million in our loan portfolio to over 1,000 businesses in PEI – 60% of those in rural PEI. We make money on those loans, so we're very happy to do that. We're making \$5 million a year in net profit on our loan portfolio and we're happy to continue to do that, and continue to support entrepreneurs in PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I expect you to support entrepreneurs, but all of them. Not just the ones – this is about the Premier and the Premier won't answer it because he's so directly tied to this. I know he tapped on your shoulder and said you have to do it, because it's his own friend's son who got approved for the loan, the whole shot.

Approval of loan/existing hotel in Summerside (further)

Question to the Premier: Do you see something wrong with this when you're giving 100% financing to an existing hotel while there's an entrepreneur out in North River putting every cent of their own money into building one?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, all of our loan portfolio is monitored and measured by the professional staff at Finance PEI. They evaluate each loan on its merits, and I have seen the loan application. I don't do the evaluation of it myself, but nowhere on there does it ask party affiliation.

I know the member opposite really wants it to say that, he's really excited if we would do that, but you can go on the website; download the application yourself and see that it doesn't have it on there, which –

Mr. Fox: Table the application.

Mr. Palmer: – I know will be disappointing to the member, but it's not there.

They're based on merit and the ability to pay back.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm sure it's somewhere in the fine print, the part that the rest of us Islanders don't get to see. It probably has to do with dinner tickets or helping with the leadership campaign if you're leader. That might have had something to do with it. It's not like you didn't know he was a Liberal. It's not like you didn't know that his dad ran the Premier's leadership campaign. That stinks pretty bad; to anybody that should stink bad.

Between 2012 and 2016, profits to Island's hotels raised from \$800,000 to \$9.2 million, according to Stats Canada. So, we've heard the last couple of years about record-breaking seasons and I'm no genius, but I'm pretty sure that a bank would fund something like that given those numbers backing it up.

Question to the Premier: Did this loan recipient go to the bank and get turned down for his financing before he turned to the Liberal loan machine?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, again, I know that there isn't a party affiliation part on the application and I know it's disappointing to the member opposite that somebody may not – that somebody may follow their political affiliation of their father and their grandfather before them. Maybe that's not the case anymore. Maybe it's not 1950 anymore.

We're very proud of entrepreneurs, and I don't think anybody should be punished or given a greater opportunity based on political affiliation of their grandfather.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The web presence program from Innovation PEI provides funds for small businesses and industry organizations to design, develop, and host a website and register a unique URL domain name. The program will cover 40% of the eligible costs to a maximum of \$500 per small business. Applications must be submitted before any financial or legal commitment is made on the project.

Web presence program at Innovation PEI

A question to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism: How is this program promoted to the business community?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, I know the web presence program is promoted on our website as well as promoted through various chambers of commerce, and anywhere that we can get access to the business community because we know that this is an important project. It's very good for businesses that are first starting out, so they get the opportunity to recover some of their costs and they're actually able to spend a little bit more on marketing.

We're very happy to continue to support entrepreneurs across PEI from large projects to small projects, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This program is in fact often one of the only business support programs from Innovation PEI that any small business can qualify for, and I have been a supporter and a promoter of this program in previous work.

Mr. Trivers: Me too.

Ms. Bell: So is my colleague.

If a business owner has registered a URL or begun any work on their website in any way, however, they will not qualify for this program as per the eligibility criteria.

Approved web presence program applications

A question to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism: How many applications does this program receive a year, and how many applications are actually approved?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, I don't have that information with me, but I can certainly take it away and bring it back tomorrow or sometime in the next couple of days.

But, we do have a micro-loan program that supports trades. We support small-scale food processing, and those are loans to a maximum of \$15,000. So, we do have supports out there for small business, and we're very happy to continue to do that because we know that business is very important and they are the engine of the economy.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, \$500 doesn't buy a lot of gas, but it's better than nothing. But, one of the things to consider is that many business owners now make their own websites and not necessarily a third party provider, but only quotes from third party providers in PEI are considered for eligibility under the program.

Evaluation of web presence program

The question to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism: When was the last time this program and its eligibility criteria were evaluated?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, we continue to evaluate programs that are available to small business across PEI because we know it's really important.

As I said, they are the engine of the economy in PEI and we continue to expand some of our programs like our micro loans that we have available, and I know there's winter production financing that falls into that micro-loan program that can offer up to a \$15,000 loan for craft people as they build their inventory over the winter so it'll be available for sale coming into their busy season.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Last week, the report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges was tabled and I'm very pleased that we're making progress in modernizing this Legislature. However, there are still a number of issues that have not been addressed by this committee such as election finance reform and lowering the voter age.

In January, I wrote to the Chair of the standing committee on democratic renewal for the second time to request that the committee be reconvened.

Request for Special Committee on Democratic Renewal to reconvene

A question to the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture: Why did you not reply to my letters?

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

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

I would note that I don't believe this to be something that's within my purview in either of my ministerial capacities, but let me just point out that there was a lot of work on this file that was done throughout the course of the winter, whether it be through the development of a map that would be utilized in the next referendum or in relation to the legislation that will be relevant to that, which as we have indicated on a number of different occasions, we are working on right now.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I should say that we never met to discuss the maps at all and that was entirely the work of the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

Since my letter in January when the minister was indeed minister of education, the Leader of the Opposition has proposed that we consider the possibility of introducing consensus government on Prince Edward Island.

Study of consensus government in DR committee

A question to the same minister: Do you think that this is a subject that should be studied by the Special Committee on Democratic Renewal?

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

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

I want to first note that I do feel that I should be very careful in terms of how this question is answered because I don't think I have the capability to speak on behalf of all my committee members on that committee. I think there are certain actions that were undertaken by the committee that would indicate that those options were considered and in fact, I can remember two presentations in relation to consensus government that were made to the committee at the time.

I do think the hon. Leader of the Opposition's input is valued and I do have some questions as to the timing of that, but I don't think I have the mandate to speak on behalf of my committee members here, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

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

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I appreciate the minister's answer and perhaps that's all the more reason to reconvene the committee.

For a year now, I have been asking for this special committee to meet so we can complete our mandate and discuss just these sorts of issues.

Shut down of Special Committee on DR

Question to the same minister: Will you confirm that the Premier has shut down this committee without actually informing the committee members to ensure that no further work is done on democratic renewal?

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

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

Again, this is a totally improper question.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party would know that this is something outside of the purview of this Chamber in terms of answers as to what would have gone on at that committee. It's something that's outside of my purview as minister, not proper to be asked during Question Period.

Again, what I will say, is that a lot of work has gone on in relation to democratic renewal in this province over the few months. I suspect there will a lot more to come. This is in stark contrast to what we recognized, as a committee, when we were doing our work, and what the hon. member is here saying right now. And, I do take offence to that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Minister, you are my third health and wellness minister, who I'm going to pose this question to on midwifery –

Mr. LaVie: Good luck.

Ms. Casey: – some say that I'm tenacious with this issue, but minister, those, who are tenacious are people like Joyce England, the members of BORN, and the PEI association of midwives, who have been advocating for midwifery services on Prince Edward Island for close to 20 years. This week there will be many events leading up to International Day of the Midwife on May 5th.

The advocates for midwifery on the Island, including Joyce England were present on the gallery on May 11th, 2017, when the registered health professions act was unanimously passed by this House.

Proclamation of Regulated Health Professions Act

Minister: When you will proclaim the registered health professions act.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I guess the short answer to that, is yes, hon. member, you are tenacious when it comes to this very important subject. Obviously, you are a great advocate for the area of midwifery on Prince Edward Island, and I

would say passionate, as well, about it, hon. member.

As you mentioned we were able to get introduced, and passed on the floor of the Legislature this registered health professions act last year. We are working now on regulations to accompany the act. We intend that, as soon as we get those done we'll be able to proclaim the act. Hon. member, I'm very pleased to say that, I think, that we are on target to have that completed by this summer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Appointment of registrar

Minister, that is great news. I think all of those listening will be thrilled with that.

I understand that a registrar will have to be appointed. Who will that be and what will their job be?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Currently, the Department of Health and Wellness, we, oversee almost 100 statutes and regulations so each compete for priority for the legislative agenda. That's kind of our causes for delay.

When we do get this act proclaimed this summer, we will, indeed, need appoint a registrar. I don't have the name of who that could be or is, or possibly could be.

We do that the role that they play will be vitally important. A few of their responsibilities, also, will be receiving and assessing applications, providing recommendations as to whether or not to designate a health profession to a registered body, to perform disciplinary duties as required by the act, and other roles as they will need to do their work, as well, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well minister, we are making some progress on midwifery.

Timeline for regulating midwives

Minister: Once the act is proclaimed, this summer, and I'll hold you to that, and a registrar is appointed, how long until we see midwives regulated to work on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Hon. member, as soon as we get the act proclaimed, we will be open to take applications. That work will be progressing very well.

The purpose of this act is to provide regulation to health professions practicing with small member numbers on Prince Edward Island. They will – not only be midwives – but there will also be acupuncturist, naturopaths, that will be looking to work on Prince Edward Island under this regulated umbrella.

The act will set out a very clear process for regulation in areas such as; determining appropriateness of profession, and it'll also talk about scope of practice and standard practice. Once we get this proclaimed, I anticipate that we will see applications rolling in. We'll try to get them out as quickly as we can, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Mr. Speaker, on December 19th, 2016, an Emyvale farmer and his farm company were charged with eight offences under the pesticide act. One hour and 18 minutes after a conservation officer laid these charges, Erin Mitchell reported to the Premier's office that the farmer had been charged. We now know seven of these charges were laid without factual foundation and dropped.

A minister of justice would certainly receive

a breakdown of departmental charges. What shocks me is the haste at which this Islander's charges were reported directly to the Premier.

Information on charges under pesticide act

My question for the minister of justice is: Does the Premier or his staff routinely get such timely information on charges in one particular case? If not, why did it happen here?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I'm not sure if that question was directed to the minister of justice, or me. Let me respond –

Mr. Myers: All of mine were directed to you (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: I would have, at the time, been the minister of justice. The deputy of justice and the deputy to the Attorney General has been mentioned as having made that report. It wouldn't normally or necessarily be the case that such matters would be reported to the minister in such a short time span. But, if it was, the case that that did happen –

Mr. Fox: Totally unethical.

Premier MacLauchlan: – it would be because that was in the deputy minister's –

Mr. Fox: Totally.

Premier MacLauchlan: – judgment that that was appropriate to be reported.

Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: I'll try it again to the minister of justice, but if the Premier wishes to answer, that's fine.

All the more reason, why would he get it reported so immediately instead of waiting for the monthly report.

Knowledge of charges under pesticide act

What advanced knowledge or involvement did you have, the Premier's office, have in laying these charges? Why so immediate? Why couldn't you wait for the monthly report?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what the hon. member has in mind, a monthly report.

Let me assure the House that whatever was involved in that investigation that led to the laying of those charges would be done entirely within the discretion and independent judgment of the investigating officials and the decision to lay charges would not have had any part – where there would be no part played by either the deputy minister or the Attorney General, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the minister of justice: These charges were laid six days before Christmas.

Directing power of state

Will you commit to my constituents, who are farmers, that your office will not direct the power of the state against them because they fell out of favour with this government?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

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

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

As a former officer of the law, I would think that the hon. member would be very careful in asking a question like that in a place like this. There is an insinuation that goes along with it.

Let me assure you that all of the officers of the law that work within, or under the supervision of our department take their jobs

very seriously. That would include police officers, conservation officers, Crown Attorneys. Let me assure you that we do not interfere in the operation of their discretion, in terms of who they might charge and when they might charge them, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You are well aware that the crab fleet and both the lobster fleet on PEI set their traps yesterday. So setting day has come and gone. There were big safety issues on the north side of the Island on setting day.

Dredged harbours on north side of PEI

Will the minister of fisheries explain why your government failed to properly dredge the harbours on the north side of PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member's well aware, the fishing industry certainly is a very perilous profession. It's a difficult opportunity for people to try to make a living.

The province, we are really advocating to make sure that we have safe and accessible harbours for our fishers, but the reality is that it's small craft and harbours through the federal government that is responsible for dredging in the Province of Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a new issue. I've been sitting in this seat for seven years and I've heard this issue for seven years now. It's not a new issue.

Conversations with federal government re: dredging harbours

To the question to the minister of fisheries: Did you talk to the federal government about this issue?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to accessibility to harbours and to the fishing industry in general, I do have conversations very regularly with, whether it's my federal MP, or whether it's the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and unfortunately there were a couple of incidents that occurred, actually one in my own riding where a vessel got grounded and swamped and it was great work within the fishing community for them to come and rescue those particular individuals.

The reality is, though, in some of these cases especially, there's a significant amount of sand that's moving up and down the north shore as well as the south shore and from this particular perspective, all three dredges that are in the province are in action. Weather can be a challenge sometimes too and ice in and ice out is also a factor, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is their lives are in danger. These fishers, their lives are in danger. We saw it over the weekend. One boat capsized and there were fellow fishers handy; rescued the four or five men.

Dredged harbours on north side of PEI (further)

Question to the minister: Will you not only today, but into the future, take immediate action to dredge the harbours on the north side of PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: I do, as minister of fisheries and also as a MLA, have the opportunity to attend regular port authority meetings where they brief me and keep me up to date on some of the challenges within their harbours. I have the opportunity in my

department as also in contact constantly with Baron Delaney of small crafts and harbours to try to get some priorities.

If I take some of the situations, soundings have to be done, ice has to be gone so the boats can get out, the navigational buoys have to be put in place and in this particular case, we actually have three dredges that are currently in operation and, in fact, one is actually at Covehead Harbour as we speak and we're hopeful that dredging can commence very shortly. There's also a dredge at North Lake as well as at Malpeque harbour currently, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, this will be your final question.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My final question to the minister of fisheries on PEI: Will you reach out to the federal government, your federal government, and not only start dredging ASAP on north side channels; not only this year, not only tomorrow, but into the future?

This is an issue we've heard – not today – we've heard this for the last seven years, 10 years, the minister of fisheries before you, he heard all about it and you're hearing it. It's an issue every year on the wharves.

Can you make sure that this is done into the future?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: As I indicated earlier, it is a very perilous profession, the fishing industry and I also look at the issue of making sure our harbours are as free and as accessible as they possibly can be, so it's a safety factor in many cases.

I have had communications with my MP, the DFO – right at the moment, all of the current dredges in Prince Edward Island are in operation, and they usually are right from ice in to ice out – they are in operation. We'll do everything we can to encourage them that and if there's even more dredges available out there, I hope there's contractors out there that would consider getting into that particular business and

providing that service so we can do these things quicker, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]