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

FOR

FRIDAY, 4 MAY 2018



Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

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

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

I'd like to respond to a few questions asked of me yesterday by the Leader of the Third Party about UPEI.

There are no provincial fundings provided to the UPEI program in Egypt. To the question on human rights, while I am not in a position to debate the human rights record of any country, I will share one comment from the UPEI president: Education is the best tool to enhance human rights. Canada has a great tradition in teaching and demonstrating the values of a civil and just society. Teaching our curriculum in Egypt or Dubai, or anywhere else, will see graduating students gain an appreciation for Canadian values and what Canadians stand for. I would also add that I have the upmost faith in UPEI's ability and passion for protecting the rights and interests of their students and faculty.

With that, I would to table some information in response to these questions in a form of a letter from the UPEI president.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Questions by Members

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

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

Last week, I asked the Premier why the report on the Wood Islands ferry taskforce had never been publicly released. Shortly after Question Period copies of the report were delivered, hand delivered to the media and myself.

The date on that report is June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The report made six recommendations about the future of the ferry service.

**Wood Islands ferry taskforce report**

Question to the Premier: What action has your government taken on these

recommendations that sat on a desk for almost a year?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the first action that we took was to create a Regional Economic Advisory Council for regions of our province; one serving and being focused on the prosperity and the well-being of the eastern part of the province with several of the members of that regional council being also members of the Wood Islands ferry taskforce.

They are identifying the ferry service as one of the priorities for the work of that advisory council.

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

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

I do appreciate that taskforce moving forward. The recommendations that actually came from the ferry taskforce was an independent economic impact study on the regional importance of the ferry service now, and for the next five to 10 years.

**Economic impact study on ferry service**

When will that specific study be commissioned – has it been commissioned, and has it been completed, yet?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, will be well aware, on, I'm pretty sure it was May 5<sup>th</sup> of last year, a year ago tomorrow, there was a public announcement by the federal government with, and indeed, the Member from Belfast-Murray River was present, as were many others; hon. Lawrence MacAulay, MP for Pictou County, were there to indicate a commitment by the federal government for a couple of decades and the plan of action to secure commitments for ferry service in response to an RFP.

We've stayed, very actively, interested in that, and actively encouraging the federal government along those lines.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Yes, I was at that announcement. It was a great announcement, but we're not there, yet. We still do not have an RFP. We still do not know what the ferry service model will look like.

The taskforce recommended that when considering replacement ferries, emphasis should be placed on green technologies to address emission targets and develop opportunities.

### **Replacement ferry-green technology**

Question to the Premier: What work has your government done to advance this recommendation that any replacement ferry incorporate more environmentally-friendly technologies?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, that particular recommendation, and to the purpose behind it, is one that our government heartily endorses and has in our discussions with and representations to the federal government.

I met, in early November of 2017, with the hon. Marc Garneau, Minister of Transport for Canada, who has the primary responsibility for that ferry service and the RFP going forward. Certainly, we have been in regular contact with our own MPs, notably the hon. Lawrence MacAulay.

I can assure the House that the possibility that the ferry service could be one that could model green technology in the marine environment is one that we heartily endorse.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Another recommendation was that research should be done into the feasibility of winter crossings. It's a failsafe effort in an event of a catastrophic incident with the Confederation Bridge.

The taskforce flagged the need to maintain year-round link with the mainland as imperative.

### **Year-round service with Wood Islands ferry**

Premier: How has your government acted on this recommendation to further explore the idea of winter crossings and have you put that forward with the federal government in Ottawa?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, what we have certainly done is to make sure that the federal government, as it moves forward with its RFP, would consider and encourage proponents, because that's the nature of an RFP, proponents to take a look at that aspect. For the same reason that we're interested in green technology, we can be mindful of how, you know, our climate is changing and there may, indeed, be some merit in moving forward in a way that could give year-round service.

If there is to be year-round service what our government is doing is growing the economy in all parts of the province. I'm very proud to say that we can go to all of the communities throughout the eastern part of the province and see the kind of prosperity that might, indeed, warrant a year-round service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I can tell you the economic impact to eastern PEI when there was one ferry; it was pretty grave that summer. To say you're growing the economy, the ferry service is imperative to make that happen.

The taskforce also looked at the role the ferry plays in trade and exports and

recognized that a mitigation strategy be created to make sure our exports, through the ferry service, aren't negatively impacted by carbon tax.

**Impact of trade and exports through ferry service re: carbon tax**

Question to the Premier: What work has your government done on a mitigation strategy to make sure that trade and exports through our ferry service aren't negatively impacted by this carbon tax?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, let me come to the larger question of what our government is doing to encourage trade and export, which is really the question that's being asked.

We've grown trade and our exports from this province, and, indeed, from the eastern part of the province. You can go to the Montague Bay fisheries; you can go to North Lake, you can go to Souris, you can go to Pooles Corner, and find, and in other parts of our great province, in the eastern part of the province; go to Belfast Mini Mills, there are lots of things going on in all parts of our province, and notably in the eastern part, that warrant getting our goods and services to the larger world and to doing it on terms that are profitable.

We are very proud of that, and proud of what the private sector is doing. I might say, on the point about that season, when the ferry was – it wasn't operating anywhere close to the level we wanted it, the operators, in the eastern part of the province, did, indeed, see that they gave good service to their customers. And their customers did come and we saw growth in the eastern part of the province in that season and we're proud of the work that they're doing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

That very fact has been brought to my attention. A number of people did do very well that year, but it left a bad taste in the

mouth of a number of tourists, who did not have the ferry service there.

We had a motion to take the ferry issue to committee. The committee recommended a taskforce. The taskforce came back with good recommendations that really collected dust for a year.

**Wood Islands ferry taskforce report (further)**

Premier: I want your commitment that you, and your government, are not going to sit idly by with a wait-and-see-attitude instead of standing up for Islanders about this issue.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, within weeks of the taskforce presenting its report, we had the commitment. The commitment, historic commitment, unprecedented commitment, from the federal government to pursue the path, that, in fact, we've just been discussing.

There's never been a time, in terms of that ferry service, when the outlook and the opportunity have been more positive. That's something that of course we support, and of course we encourage, and of course we want our regional economic council to encourage, and the municipalities, and the members of the Legislature, and the businesses throughout our province to recognize how important that ferry service is to our continued growth, and prosperity, and wellbeing. I believe that everybody that I can see understands that and is working successfully toward that goal.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

When government tried to close schools across the Island last year, the government released information about the physical condition of schools. Bloomfield Elementary was one of the schools government tried to close. Government said the school needed to replace the boiler and oil tank, upgrade gym lighting, and the HV system was just fair.

**Repairs needed at Bloomfield school**

Question to the Premier: Why has no work happened to fix any of these issues at Bloomfield Elementary in the last 13 months?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** That's something, of course, that I have to take under advisement. As we've heard earlier in this House, the infrastructure of our school system is something that is the responsibility of the Public Schools Branch, who work according to their priority list of issues that they're addressing and on capital questions, or maintenance and repair questions and Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to see what I can bring back to the House on this question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

Premier, while you're going back, I'll give you some more to take back. When will government get around to fixing these issues at the Bloomfield Elementary School?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** I'll be happy to bring that back, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

At St. Louis Elementary the government said the boiler and oil tank needed replacement, a partial roof replacement, the HV system – plumbing and electrical was just fair.

**Repairs needed at St. Louis school**

Question to the Premier: Why has no work happened to fix any of these issues at St. Louis Elementary in the last 13 months?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in response to the first question and this is something that we've heard about on the

floor of this House and I believe it does reflect the proper functioning of government for the Public Schools Branch to have the autonomy, and the responsibility, and the resources to look after existing facilities and to make plans for further facilities, or expansions, or what work is required as we have a growing student population and as we have added investments in the front line resources in our schools. We have confidence in our schools; we have confidence in the performance of our students and we recognize that the Public Schools Branch has a job to do and I'll be happy to come back with an answer to that question.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

Premier, 13 months ago this report was issued. 13 months is a long time. When will this government get around to fixing these issues at St. Louis Elementary?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, there was a decision made to keep the school at St. Louis Elementary open and that was something that we stand behind. We have brought forward last fall a capital budget, which was our second highest in the province's history that included a very significant commitment to work in our schools and it is combined with successive operating budgets that have made very significant commitments, historic commitments, to the operating success of our schools. I'm sure that the Public Schools Branch is well aware, through its prioritization, of areas where there's work to be done and as I said, I'll be happy to bring that back to the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

At Belfast Consolidate, government said the school needed brick work, a new roof, a new

fuel tank, and resurfacing of the parking lot. The plumbing and electrical rated just fair and the HV system needs work.

### **Repairs needed to Belfast school**

Let's try the minister of transportation to see if maybe she can have a little more info than the Premier right now: Why has no work happened to fix any of these issues at Belfast Consolidated in the last 13 months?

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

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

As we previously mentioned, we made commitments in our capital budget last fall to schools right across Prince Edward Island. We are presently doing a \$22 million retrofit of the Three Oaks in Summerside, new schools right across the province –

**Mr. Myers:** Not in Belfast.

**Ms. Biggar:** – down in Rollo Bay, just opened.

Mr. Speaker, the priorities that go into making a list of what work needs to be done on schools right across PEI lies with the school boards. They need to do their priority list, submit it, and then it will be taken under consideration in terms of what the capital budget and the budget for renovations within the school board are.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

Question to the minister of transportation – you didn't answer my question: When will government get around to fixing these issues at Belfast Consolidated?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, I can only surmise that as soon as that reaches the top priority of the school board that that will be taken under consideration.

**Mr. Fox:** When it reaches top priority (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

Well, they should be top priorities. In Georgetown Elementary, we've got government saying we need a roof replacement, boiler replacement, school siding replacement, parking lot resurfacing, new bathroom stalls and fixtures needed, plumbing and electrical rated as just fair, wheelchair access.

### **Repairs needed to Georgetown school**

Question to the transportation minister: Why has no work happened to fix any of these issues in Georgetown Elementary in the last 13 months?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, again, we'll take that under advisement and take that information back.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

Minister of transportation: This is your department – there's Cabinet ministers (Indistinct) – TIE. Do you not look after the schools? You don't look after renos of schools?

**Mr. Myers:** Ask Vessey.

**Mr. MacKay:** When will government get around to fixing these issues at Georgetown Elementary?

**Mr. Fox:** Yes.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, let me take this into the larger frame of what we're really talking about here and it's about the success of our province, the success of our students, the performance of our students. We had a big week. It didn't get

very well received on the opposition side. They didn't seem to be too pleased that our students did as well as they did in the PCAP.

**Mr. Myers:** Actually, no one talked about it.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, let me tell you something else because the opposition wants to go back always to this Chicken Little, and this is falling apart, and this needs something – we are having a baby boom. Let that be the news today. In the most recent account of our population in this province, we have more young people between the ages of zero to 14, as a percentage of our population, then is the case for the province of Ontario – and that is the case for the City of Toronto. And for the last three years, we have had more births than deaths, which has not been the case in the other Atlantic Provinces. That, Mr. Speaker, the performance of our students, the fact that we have young people who are looking for a bright future and they've got great teachers who are giving them the opportunity through education to do well, that's what we're committed to and that's what we're supporting and we're proud of it, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

Premier, if you were so proud of your students and the jobs they're doing, you would put the money and effort into fixing these schools for these children. When government tried to close those schools, the students, parents and staff, they all felt ignored, disrespected by this government.

### **Confidence in schools' future**

Question to the Premier: Do you think that your government's lack of attention to these issues is giving people in those communities confidence about their schools' future?

**An Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I think the opposition is disappointed that we didn't close the schools. We kept those schools open and in the intervening years and budgets, we have invested in 161 additional frontline positions in our schools throughout this province and we are investing in the capital, and in the upkeep of our schools, and our students, and our teachers, and our province are all performing at the top of the rank and we're proud of that.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

Premier, I will congratulate you on the floor of this House today for keeping those schools open. You did listen to opposition. You listened to parents and teachers, and you did keep the schools open. For one of the first times in ages you kept good to your word on something.

Given what's happened to date, it would be hard to fault people for feeling like those schools are being slowly starved of resources. We've got roofs leaking here every day.

### **Repairs of structural issues in schools**

Question to the Premier: Will these issues be fixed at these schools before your government takes another run at school closures?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, we've heard about other schools here on the floor of this House and there is a matter of setting priorities, knowing what the situation is, and addressing those with the resources, very considerable resources, that are made available for school repairs, for school expansions, for school improvements, and for investing in the operating success and the continued learning and the instruction in our schools.

That's where we have put our priorities right across the board and if you look at our most recent budget and the one before, education



has been the very top priority and we are seeing the results and we're proud of it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

We recently learned during debate in this House that there are almost 1,000 Islanders enrolled in the methadone and Suboxone programs here on Prince Edward Island and that number, of course, only represents those Islanders with addiction issues who have sought treatment. Nobody knows how many Islanders are currently using street drugs. What we do know, however, is that Fentanyl has arrived here on Prince Edward Island.

Yesterday, the Chief Public Health Officer, Dr. Heather Morrison, informed us that Fentanyl has been discovered in a seizure of cocaine.

A question to the Minister of Health and Wellness; naloxone kits, which are the emergency treatment for a Fentanyl overdose, costs \$50 and although they are indeed readily available without a prescription, they are not available without the funds to buy them.

#### **Availability of naloxone kits**

What is government doing to make naloxone available to all Islanders that risk of overdose from Fentanyl?

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

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

The events of yesterday where the Chief Public Health Officer spoke about the alert for Fentanyl that has been discovered in a recent drug, I'll call it a bust, that the Charlottetown Police had last week, and Fentanyl being part of that cocaine – it's important for us as a department to put that information out for Islanders that may indeed be using street drugs so that they are aware of this and this is a caution to them.

Today, naloxone is available at all needle exchange sites. It's available at the provincial addiction treatment centre as well at the Queen Street Recovery Clinic, Montague and Souris community mental health and addiction sites, and at the Provincial Correction Centre and also all the all the Island EMS would have naloxone kits, as well all police forces on Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Heather Morrison told media, and I quote: There have been no Fentanyl deaths related to this seizure.

Which is different from there have been no Fentanyl deaths on Prince Edward Island.

#### **Deaths related to Fentanyl in province**

Minister: Are you aware of any deaths on Prince Edward Island related to Fentanyl?

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

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

I don't have that type of data at my fingertips. As what was related to last week's incident, they are still investigating that.

I do know that naloxone kits have been used, I believe, on a couple of occasions on Prince Edward Island and police showed up to particular investigations they were doing, but I don't have the number of what the hon. member asked for and I don't even know if there is indeed a number. But, I'll have to take that under advisement and do some investigating.

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

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

#### **Protection for addicted Islanders**

Considering how deadly Fentanyl can be, and having watched thousands of Canadians

die in other jurisdictions from accidental overdoses, what lessons have been learned and what can we do proactively here on Prince Edward Island to protect the lives of addicted Islanders?

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

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

Although we pride ourselves in Prince Edward Island of not being the same as every other jurisdiction, jurisdictions all across Canada are at various levels of what I will call opioid crises.

Prince Edward Island is not immune to opioid use on our wonderful province, but our occurrences are significantly less than other jurisdictions. This is in part because of our methadone program that we recently put in in the past number of years. Family involvement in Prince Edward Island is great when somebody is struggling with addictions. As a department, we are working diligently with the addictions facilities all across Prince Edward Island to provide that wonderful service for people who want to get clean and to help them with that process.

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

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

My question this morning is for the Minister of Family and Human Services.

Minister, during capital estimates your department announced \$750,000 in capital improvements for infrastructure.

### **Capital improvements for housing infrastructure**

Can you tell me where this money will be allocated and if any of this money will be allocated to improving housing infrastructure?

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

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

Government continues to invest in housing across Prince Edward Island and I think that was quite evident in our budget that we announced \$17 million over the next two years to invest in affordable housing options across Prince Edward Island.

But an answer to your question, hon. member, that money is going to be used for renovations to seniors' units across Prince Edward Island. These renovations will include things such as improvements to sidewalks, parking areas; improvements to roofs, sidewalks, basements, windows, many improvements to make sure that our seniors across Prince Edward Island are living comfortably, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

Minister, two buildings in my district that are in desperate need of repair and renovation are Spring Park Court, which is locally known as 501 Queen Street, and the Hunt Court Complex; windows not opening, common rooms on the second floor not accessible to all, no elevators for the seniors' population.

### **Renovations to Hunt Court and Spring Park Court**

Can you tell me if any work has been done on these two locations recently?

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

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

Yes, actually, for this year we have \$68,000 that we have allocated for Hunt Court for walkways and structural basement repairs, as well as \$27,000 for basement repairs at Spring Park Court. As mentioned previously, this is in addition to more than the \$150,000 in the operating budget that we have for repairs and maintenance specifically for these two buildings to make sure that they are kept updated and safe for our residents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Minister, Charlotte Court in Charlottetown-Lewis Point was the first seniors' home built on the Island in 1968. We were pleased to replace that in 2011. Spring Park Court was built in 1977 and Hunt Court was built in 1972. Due to the age of both of these locations, there are still further repairs and updating that must be done in order to provide adequate housing for these people.

### **Replacement of seniors' housing facilities**

Can you tell me what further repairs are scheduled in the coming year and if Spring Park Court or Hunt Court are on your priority list for replacement?

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

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

Again, I must commend the hon. member because she is a tireless advocate for the residents in her district, and I applaud your dedication to them.

Over the past several years there have been many renovations, as mentioned, to the improvement of these two buildings totaling approximately \$1.2 million. Some of those projects were new flooring, roofs, sidewalks, patio doors. Again, as mentioned earlier, that is in addition to the more than \$150,000 that we provide annually to these.

I must also mention that our housing team is in contact with our seniors' housing and our family housing units on a regular basis to ensure that any immediate or emergency cases that will arise will be dealt with efficiently and effectively.

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

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is also for the Minister of Family and Human Services. Our government's 2018-2019 Budget included a

\$17 million investment over two years to increase and sustain affordable housing in the province.

### **Sustainable and affordable housing**

Minister, can you tell me how this money will be allocated?

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

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

I am very excited about this investment. It shows our government's commitment to investing in affordable housing needs for all Islanders.

One of the ways, actually, I'm very pleased to stand here today and say that we will be investing \$1 million into our PEI Home Renovation program this year. What that will do is that will allow any Island, who has applied for that program, and who meets the criteria, they will be awarded the funding this year. That will be, approximately, 300 more Islanders, so a total of 500 Islanders, that will receive up to \$6,000 for their home renovation projects. If they are a disabled person, they will receive up to \$8,000 for home renovations that will meet their disability needs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

That's great news to hear that that area of concern. That is something that has been brought up in the House a number of times. It's great to see that that's being taken care of in such a great fashion.

Part of the \$17 million investment includes up to 1,000 new low-income units over the past four years.

Minister, in your motion last week, you stated that these investments would be in Charlottetown and Summerside relating to Queens and Prince Counties. I'm not sure that I heard, or that you included Kings County.

**Low-income units**

Can you give us more details on this and will Kings County be receiving the same investments?

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

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

In my announcement, last week, I spoke about the 1,000 new units that we will be – that will be achieved through various ways.

Some will be through new construction. Some will be through upgrading existing units, and some will be through rent supplements, which help Islanders, who are currently renting in the private market afford their home a little bit more.

If I said that Queens County and Prince County were the only ones that would be receiving this, I was incorrect. We will be looking across the Island when our – and working with our housing taskforce and our co-development team in the development – with the housing action plan that will come out with recommendations that will include the entire Province of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Roach:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that. It's great to hear that Kings County, we're still on the map –

**Ms. Mundy:** You're still on the map.

**Affordability housing in Kings County**

**Mr. Roach:** Minister: Will you commit today that Kings County will be receiving the same investments in affordability housing as Queens County and Prince County?

**Mr. LaVie:** More.

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

**Ms. Mundy:** Mr. Speaker, the housing action plan is due to be complete in June of this year. It will help guide our decision on where units will be placed, and what we will, indeed, what the needs are of Islanders.

I can assure you that our co-development team and our housing taskforce, as well as the entire housing action plan will include tip-to-tip what is needed out there. Where the most need is, and I can guarantee you that, where the most need is, we will be dealing with that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Yesterday, we were talking about food education and food security and how our important our farmers are right across Prince Edward Island.

**Leasing land to farmers**

My question is the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Minister, why has your department changed its land-use policy for leasing land to the farmers?

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

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

It's must be Kings County day today in the Question Period.

The hon. member has communicated to me his concern about certain policies within the department.

Right now, the policy is, is that any leased land that comes up, that provincially-leased land to farmers will be looked at, and if it can be put back into forestry, it will be put back into forestry, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

This is the government that put a dozen bulldozers in Bonshaw and took every tree down. Now, they're taking the land from the farmers for reforestation?

**Consultation with farmers on land-use policies**

Question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: When these policies were changed, did you consult with farmers?

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

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

I agree with the member from Souris, that farmland is important and agriculture on this Island is the number one industry and we must protect it.

Upon the request from the member, I did ask my department to review this policy because, quite frankly, if we can keep farmland in production, it's good for Prince Edward Island. It's good for the economy. I've asked the department to review that policy.

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

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

I do have a farmer in District 1 that has been farming land leased from the government for the last 30 years.

He received a letter. Not a phone call, not a visit, but a letter in March that he had to be off this land in May.

Shouldn't farmers leasing government land get a little bit more of a notice than two months?

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

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

I couldn't agree with the member more. That's the reason upon the member from Souris' request to me that to review this and to review this letter.

I did go back to the department and I did ask

the department to reach out to this member, or this person. I believe, this government believes, agriculture is important to this community and we must keep as much land as possible in agriculture. It provides us food. It provides us exports. It provides jobs. I couldn't agree with the member, more.

Thank you.

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

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

The Minister of Communities, Land and Environment is in Hansard saying: When farmers do well, PEI does well. It's true.

Question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Are there any other farmers in this situation?

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, it is the policy. I've that the department review the policy. We will be reviewing the policy because the government couldn't agree more with it. We have to keep agriculture land in agricultural use because it's vital to the economy of Prince Edward Island.

Farmers produce a lot of good food here on Prince Edward Island and we must back the farmer.

Thank you.

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

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

Farmers are great stewards of the land. When they lease land that's been on the farm for 30 years and we decide to kick them off in two months.

**Consultation with other government departments**

Question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Did you consult with the department of agriculture or any other departments across PEI?

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

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

As I said, earlier to the member, that I've asked for a review in the department over this policy because, again, I believe and everybody in this room believes that the agriculture community has stepped up to the environmental challenge here on Prince Edward Island.

We now have 15 foot buffer zones around the Morell River. I understand it's a 45 metre buffer zone. We have the ALUS program. We have the 4R program going in the Kensington area.

I believe that farmers have stood up and backed the environment of Prince Edward Island and they're good stewards of the land. Number priority here; we want to work with the agricultural community, the department of environment to ensure that we do have adequate farmland, good farmland because it is good for the economy of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you.

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

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

### **Policy changes to land leased to farmers**

My next question is to the minister of fisheries and agriculture: Are you aware of the policy changes to the land leased to the farmers?

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, this is a really good line of questioning. When it comes to agriculture production in this province, I have a belief and our department has a belief that all land has a value. I think it's important to note that if there's any land owner, whether it's a government department, or whether it's an individual that our department is there to maybe look at agriculture opportunities and what are the best possible agricultural uses for any particular piece of land.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, when we take 12 bulldozers and put them through the forest to make our highways in Bonshaw and in Cornwall, actually – two highways – we're taking land from the farmer for reforestation. It doesn't make sense to me.

My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: Do you agree with these policy changes?

Oh, come on.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to the Bonshaw Trans-Canada Highway extension. As a result of that particular project, there is now a new protected area –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) taking the land from farmers (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** The new park that's there. We've developed 25 kilometers –

**Mr. Fox:** You've got big mounds of dirt still there.

**Ms. Biggar:** – of walking trails within a new natural park.

We're protecting the area out there.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** We've been able to develop a resource that the families –

**Mr. Fox:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** – across PEI can come – we work closely with the farmers as well when it comes to leasing land and when it comes to us to lease a piece of property, we work very closely to turn that around as part of our policy.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

[End of Question Period]