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

FOR

TUESDAY, 8 MAY 2018

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

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

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

As, I believe, you're aware, last Friday, I was out touring the Island speaking with teachers. I understand there were a number of questions relevant to my department, so I have some answers today.

In respect of capital repairs to schools, as I've said, in this House, before we have \$2 million a year for the next five years of our \$50 million capital plan allocated to capital repairs in schools.

Tenders have gone out, or have been awarded recently for boiler stack replacement at KISH; a boiler stack replacement at Glen Stewart primary; replacement of two boilers and a boiler stack at St. Jean elementary; a partial roof replacement at St. Jean elementary; a partial roof replacement at Greenfield; a partial roof replacement at Mt. Stewart Consolidated; a partial roof replacement at Hernewood intermediate; and replacement of boilers and a stack replacement at West Kent Elementary.

In addition, tenders will be awarded this spring for capital projects in schools including; oil tank replacements at Bloomfield Elementary and St. Louis Elementary and roof repairs at Belfast Consolidated, which is to be done this summer.

These are all part of our overall plan and their priorities as previously indicated that are set by the Public Schools Branch. I see the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira grunting over there. The roof that he had indicated earlier was looked at and that issue, I gather, has been remedied. The roof should be good to go in their new school there, for a number of years to come.

Thank you.

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Bill No. 102, which passed unanimously by the House in December, would enable a PTSD diagnosis to be made by psychiatrists, psychologists or family physicians. Government's PTSD bill, now before the House, would prevent family physicians from making a PTSD diagnosis.

PTSD diagnosis and family physicians

Question to the Premier: Who advised government to disallow family physicians from making a PTSD diagnosis under your bill?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, at about the time I became Premier, I had meetings with CUPE representatives and first responders, who, at the time, brought forward this issue. There was a policy introduced in 2016, which, indeed, does see that work done by psychologists and psychiatrists.

I was pleased when this matter was on the floor on Friday to hear that 90% of the cases that have come forward under that policy have, indeed, received a positive response and are receiving services and resources through the Workers Compensation Board.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I guess I'll have to speak a little slower because the Premier didn't, obviously, hear the question when I asked him: Who advised government not to allow family physicians to diagnosis PTSD.

Other provinces do allow family physicians to make PTSD diagnosis along with psychologists and psychiatrists. In fact, Bill No. 102 included all three groups of health professionals and every MLA in this House

voted to allow these health professionals to make a PTSD diagnosis. Now, government says they don't support that.

Question to the Premier: What changed between Christmas and Easter to change your mind about the ability of family physicians to make a PTSD diagnosis?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the answer to the question about the consultation is the Workers Compensation Board, an independent body that has been in place for over a century in this province that, indeed, brought forward the policy that I mentioned in 2016. We heard that 90% of those who come forward have received support and had a proper diagnosis. Indeed, we heard that with the network of psychologists and psychiatrists that are in place that there could be a response on the order of 35 days. I'd have to say, as Premier, or as an Islander, I was proud to hear that and to hear and to know that we're talking about an approach that will put Prince Edward Island in the top two or three provinces in this country for dealing with traumatic injuries on the job.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I want to remind the government members, and particularly the Premier, that this is Mental Health Week. We only have to speak to anyone suffering a mental health issue out there in the community to come to the realization that the availability to see a psychologist or a psychiatrist, particularly a psychiatrist, is not within 35 days. It's, in some cases, it's six months. It could be a year.

If fewer health professionals are allowed to make a PTSD diagnosis then it stands to reason that fewer cases of PTSD will be diagnosed for Island workers living with it. Of course, that allows the costs to be lowered to government and WCB.

Limited scope of PTSD diagnosis

Question to the Premier: Was the decision to limit the scope of PTSD diagnosis just a way to contain costs?

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

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

Just to initially answer the question: absolutely not. The bill was expanded to take in all workers on PEI. It was expanded to traumatic experiences. It was felt the bill that the opposition brought forward was a good bill. I commend you for that. We appreciate the work you did on that. We just felt as a government we needed to take it further.

As the Premier had indicated, there was policies put in place in 2016, and we just wanted to solidify that into legislation.

Might I add, as I indicated on Friday, there were three cases for PTSD and two of them have been looked after since December. There has been no slow down in diagnosis or in help for these people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

We know for a fact that our province has big shortages in psychologists and psychiatrists. In fact, many people call it a crisis here on PEI.

We also know that extended delays in diagnosis and treatment for PTSD can have devastating, and in fact, sometimes deadly health consequences for people suffering from it.

Mental health support for Island workers

Question to the Premier: If we have qualified health care professionals willing to help diagnose PTSD then why would your government want to put more road blocks in place of Island workers, who desperately need mental health supports?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly here on Prince Edward Island we are extremely fortunate to have 225 wonderful physicians practicing on our province. Of the 225, they all have different levels of training and experience and work that they do. Obviously, some of those 225 are our family physicians. Some of those individuals do have specialized training for PTSD.

However, not everybody, not all of those wish or choose to practice in that area and those that do, often refer to those specialists of psychologists or psychiatrists just to verify that the treatments they are having are the correct ones and in some cases, immediately will refer to those other levels, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

More than four months ago this Legislature unanimously voted to approve Bill No. 102, *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act*. I will add a bill that included every worker on PEI. Don't say our bill didn't and yours did.

Proclaiming of Bill No. 102

Question to the workforce minister: When will your government do the right thing for Island workers and proclaim Bill No. 102 and bring it into effect?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As indicated before, with some consultation we felt that the bill needed to be amended. We will look after this and bring our bill forward before the final days of this sitting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This bill gives Workers Compensation Board coverage to Island workers with a confirmed diagnosis of PTSD. All requires to become law is the Cabinet to proclaim it and follow through on their vote in the House.

Question for the workforce minister: Why are you persisting in trying to reinvent the wheel with your own bill when the House has already passed a bill?

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

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

As I had indicated before, we felt the bill needed to be expanded and that's what we did.

I would like to read a little article here with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker. It's from the National Institute of Mental Health and it being Mental Health Awareness Week, it describes what PTSD is and it also says a doctor who has experience helping people with mental illnesses, such as a psychiatrist or a psychologist can diagnose PTSD.

That's why our government felt to enshrine us in legislation that we did it right by the appropriate professionals diagnosing the disease.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you what PTSD is. I imagine everybody in this gallery can tell you what PTSD is. The government voted on Bill 102 in December and then waited for months before you tabled your bill.

Consultation with groups re: PTSD and bill

Question to the workforce minister: Why didn't you consult with first responders, nurses, union groups when you were writing your own bill in secret this winter?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I'd indicated before, the PTSD was covered under policy and the hon. member from across had consulted with the unions – we knew that. We were enhancing this bill and that's what we have done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 102 already passed the House with broad support in December. It supported all workers in PEI. It also allowed physicians to come into the picture who could diagnose PTSD. The Premier and the minister voted for it. First responders and unions welcome this step to protect workers with Bill 102.

Question to the workforce minister: Why are you so determined to take steps backwards?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's very unfortunate that the minister opposite wants to make those types of comments: take steps backward. We are trying to go forward and ensure that all Islanders are protected from traumatic disorders, be it PTSD or any traumatic disorder they may come into.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier today our whole caucus attended a news conference with first responders and unions upset over this government's shenanigans with delaying making coverage available to all Island workers.

Limiting coverage for PTSD

Question to the workforce minister: If the people who would benefit from the law feel like you're stalling and limiting coverage, how do you justify these ongoing delays?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I indicated prior, our numbers are showing us that there has been no one refused attention to this matter and since December, there were three cases forward and two of them have been approved and one is still being looked at.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

They're always talking about their numbers. First responders and unions have been lobbying government on this issue for years, hoping to see some positive change. What they've found instead is a government that strings along first responders – and that's what they've done – and all Island workers, only responding with the bare minimum efforts when the political pressure becomes too great to dodge.

Question to the workforce minister: Why do you think you're right and first responders, nurses, and other workers are wrong?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We don't feel we're right and anyone is wrong. As I indicated earlier, over and over, we are worried about all Islanders and we appreciate the work of first responders and nurses and everyone in the medical profession. Anything we can do, we need to do it right. We introduced this bill the first day of this sitting, so we've been working on it and as I indicated, we will bring this bill to a vote before the session finishes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So we've been told that hundreds of people immigrated to PEI claiming residency at the same motel in Sherwood.

Immigrants claiming residency at motel

Question to the minister of economic development: Why does your government have no safeguards in place to prevent this sort of shadiness?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We heard of this investigation as well that the hon. member is talking about and it's a federal issue. Border services are investigating. It is based on the program that was in 2008. We've evolved that program over a number of years and actually, in 2008, the Auditor General reviewed the program and made recommendations and we implemented all of those changes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well your seat mate there, dynamite, was at the helm during this time, so he could probably fill you in on how this happened.

Question to the minister again: Did any of these immigrants ever actually live on Prince Edward Island, or was it just on paper?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is an ongoing investigation and we're continuing to find out more as border services are investigating. We know that our immigration program continues to evolve. We make it better all the time and we have a new expression of interest model that we

have implemented and it continues to get better as we learn more, as we continue to grow the population here in PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So every time we turn around this government is taking the immigration program and making all Islanders look like fools, basically, by the way that they are abusing it. We have hundred of immigrants claiming to live in the exact same hotel. Six hundred immigrants living in a 45 room motel in Sherwood, if that's even possible. That's something that I would think, should be caught by your staff because you guys administer the program.

Government verification of immigrant residency

Question to the minister: How does your government verify the residency of immigrants?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our department does have a handle on it. Seventeen of those residents that are being investigated were actually coming to PEI, the rest are going somewhere else in Canada.

So, it doesn't have anything to do with our program. There were 17 that were our clients here in PEI and we continue to evolve the immigration program and we're really happy that it's continuing to grow the population in PEI and we're happy to continue with that program, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm actually quite stunned. Out of, probably, 600 people that claimed residency in one motel, 17 of them were actually ever planning on coming here, which leaves 583

that weren't going to come here at all. They were never going to –

Question to the minister: Do you think it's normal to allow our immigration program to be used in such a manner?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think the hon. member is listening to me. Seventeen of those are our immigrants that were coming to PEI that were our clients, the rest are going somewhere else in Canada.

Maybe it's actually a good tourism number for us, because they're coming to PEI – it doesn't have anything to do with our immigration program – 17 of those are coming to PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, it seems like he's got an incredible tourism program operating over there using our immigration program – where somehow 583 people who claimed that that's where they lived – so they claimed that's where they lived – were never going to come here, according to him, they never had any plan. Only 17 of the 600 people who claimed to live in one motel room in Sherwood actually planned to come here – 583 didn't.

IIDI and immigrant numbers

Question to the minister: How did that number not raise the eyebrows of the people in IIDI?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, 17 of those were applications to PEI, the rest didn't come through PEI. I don't know why the hon. member thinks that we would be reviewing the applications across all of Canada, we are looking after the ones in PEI and there were

17 applications and the rest of them came to somewhere else in Canada, so I don't know.

The member can continue to talk about those numbers being part of the PEI program. They weren't. They're not at all.

The investigation is a federal piece, and they are trying to find out and it happened to be a PEI address.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, 600 people claimed one single address in Sherwood, but we shouldn't be worried about it because 583 of them were never planning on coming here. But, they lived here because that was part of the whole scheme that was going on over there. People are going to jail. Two people were arrested. It's serious enough that people are going to jail over it.

Question to the minister: Are you confident – if your government confident that this is the only single case of this happening here in Prince Edward Island?

An Hon. Member: Good question.

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, if the member's math is correct and 583 people made an application to come to Canada and happened to use an address in PEI that has nothing to do with our department; 17 of those made application to PEI. The 583 did not make application to PEI and we wouldn't have any knowledge of those applications that are through the rest of Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: You know what happened to Allan Campbell.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm quite perplexed by the approach that the government is taking on this. People were arrested over this. From what I'm hearing, there's more coming; so I mean you can run and hide from it here today if you want. You're talking about it being an in and out program where 600 people claimed that that's where they live, but only 17 of them ever wanted to come here. Now I know where you got your million night-stay number, because you're basically trying to cheat the immigration system right here in Prince Edward Island. It's embarrassing is what it is.

Investing in immigration

Question to the minister: Is your government truly serious about investing in immigrants and bringing them here to Prince Edward Island or are you simply using it to fund your out-of-control spending?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, we're very happy with the results we're getting through immigration and it's growing our population. So, I know the hon. member is trying to convince me, which it's not working, that 583 of those were applications to PEI. They were not. They're not applications to PEI. 17 of those –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – were made to PEI.

We understand those. We monitor the applications, the 17 that we have. The Auditor General had reviewed our program in 2008, had made recommendations. We implemented those changes. So, those 583 were not applications to PEI and we would have no knowledge of those coming to PEI. It was an address they used for an application going to a difference province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

As was recently noted by the Member from Souris-Elmira, the new \$2.5 million Rural Growth Initiative replaces the \$5 million Island Communities Fund that this government failed to renew back in 2015. Despite being a larger pool of money, that former program had some problems associated with it as well, of course. We all remember the former minister using that program to fund projects in urban areas like the million dollars that were spent on the event grounds just down the road here in Charlottetown.

Rural Growth Initiative funding urban areas

A question to the Minister of Rural and Regional Development: Will the new Rural Growth Initiative also be used to fund projects in urban areas?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

Mr. Myers: Ronnie MacKinley's parking lot (Indistinct)

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you to the Green Party for finally showing an interest in rural Prince Edward Island.

Of course any projects that are province-wide in scope will be looked at and entertained. Facilities and projects that rural Islanders use will certainly be looked at and reviewed for funding.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

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

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

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

The new program criteria do indeed state that activities, and I quote: Which are not targeted at rural areas – end quote, are ineligible. But, defining rural is not straight forward and by some people's definitions, even Charlottetown might be considered rural.

Definition of ‘rural’

A question to the minister: How do you define rural?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

Mr. Murphy: I think a simple way to define it would be not urban, but that being said, there are things – programs and projects that are located in different parts of the province that are used by all Islanders, rural and urban, so I guess that being said – I guess my previous answer would be what I would have to go by.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Let’s remind ourselves this is a Rural Growth Initiative. Although there’s no mention of sustainability in the program criteria, the website also says that the program is going to expire in March 2019. In order to create sustainable rural communities, we need sustained commitment from this provincial government.

Duration of Rural Growth Initiative

A question to the minister: Is there Rural Growth Initiative a one-year program that will be cancelled next year? Or, is this a permanent commitment?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) election coming.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This initiative is to support the work of our Regional Economic Advisory Councils, which we’re serious about growing rural Prince Edward Island and it would certainly be a Cabinet decision, but I’m fairly confident that if I’m there I’m going to be fighting to keep this program funded and all the good work that it’s going to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

My colleague from Charlottetown-Parkdale raised issues earlier in this sitting with the long-term sustainability of project funding for NGOs that government partners with to deliver programs and services. The new Rural Growth Initiative also appears to be project-based funding, and I didn’t get an answer as to whether this is going to be sustained multi-year, consistent, long-term funding from the minister.

Now only that, but the Rural Growth Initiative only funds up to 50% of projects, requiring community groups to raise the rest from other sources.

Community groups and funding for projects

A question to the Minister of Rural and Regional Development: Where do you expect community groups to find the other 50% of the funds required to make these projects happen?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Even the Community Development Fund has long been used as a leverage tool to leverage money from federal governments and other sources, such as ACOA, and we do want to get buy-in from communities by them having some skin in the game as well. We fund these projects. We don’t own the projects. We fund them and the projects belong to the groups and organizations that propose the projects.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Assuming, minister, that they can indeed raise these additional funds from federal or other sources as you suggested, community groups applying for this fund must also

contribute 10% of the total cash for these projects while they still carry on paying for their ongoing operations.

A question to the minister: Are you concerned about the capacity of community groups to come up with their 10% portion of project funds?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

Ms. Biggar: Look at Chase the Ace.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No, these funding formulas have been in place for many years and there have been many great projects carried out right across the province with our previous Island Community Fund and communities have a way of raising their funds. They have gas tax money and volunteer organizations. I know different communities support and help fund different organizations like area development corporations.

I know up in my district there, the Alberton Area Development Corporation, receives some funding from the town and they're able to leverage money from ACOA, and they always seem to get their projects done, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

Of course municipalities have all kinds of ways they can raise that money through accessing gas tax or a number of other programs, but the pressure is particularly problematic in unincorporated areas where there's no municipality that can collect those taxes or raise the additional funds.

Unincorporated areas and access to fund

How will the minister ensure that unincorporated communities can also take full advantage of this new fund?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I stated earlier there are corporation bodies right across the province. Alberton Area Development Corporation. O'Leary has one, Tignish has Tignish Initiatives. These bodies take in more than just the municipal communities. They also touch out into the unincorporated areas and they're all part of the same organization.

Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

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

Later on this summer the province is going to responsible for selling cannabis after the federal government makes this legal. We'll have some outlets or whatever. There are a lot of questions, concerns about how that's going to happen.

Rollout of cannabis legalization

I'm wondering if the Minister of Finance could give us a quick review of exactly how that's going to roll out across the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During this sitting, actually of the Legislative Assembly, the PEI Cannabis Control Act and the PEI Cannabis Management Corporation Act are expected to be debated.

At this time the Crown corp. and Cannabis PEI will be created to take on a responsibility of distribution and sales of recreational cannabis. We do have a retail model. It's been in the media about the store – the four locations of the stores. Also, we're dealing with an e-commerce platform as we presently speak.

The next phase of this will be actually hiring the staff and moving the project forward

based on the timelines, when the timelines are available from the federal government.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

Qualifications to work at cannabis outlet

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

That feeds into my second question because I've been approached wondering how one would go about getting a job at working at one of these things? What would the qualifications be, and how many employees do you feel we will need across the province?

Mr. LaVie: Looking for a job?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) retired.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) retired (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over the last number of months, the PEI LCC has been dealing with union and public sector employees, the Public Service Commission to determine the workforce requirements. I believe the number is somewhere around 50 persons that will be hired, cannabis positions. There will be different levels of those positions. As we are doing e-commerce plus retail sales at storefront; almost all the positions will be unionized. The staff will be in accordance with the collective agreement presently in place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford, your second –

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

Another question I've been asked has to do with the fact that we are going to have the outlets to sell the product, it may also be sold on street corner. We're going to be allowed to grow it at home. If one is found

to be in possession of product how does one determine if it's sold at the outlet, grown in their own home with the four plants they're allowed, or, perhaps, purchased off the street corner, because, apparently, it's not decriminalized, as yet.

Determining purchase of cannabis

How would we determine where that is coming from?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: All products sold through government stores will be sealed, obviously, and packaged. It will be no different than medication served over the counter at a drug store. The sale of cannabis outside of the licenced government stores will remain illegal.

It will be identification through trying to minimize the illegal sales of cannabis on the street corners. There are other facets on where you can have cannabis; the age; transportation; there are all kinds of other identities in there that will help minimize the possibilities of contraband cannabis.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have constituents that would like an update on dead stock removal.

Removal of dead stock from farms

To the minister of agriculture: Would the minister explain how dead stock is removed from farms across the province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Very good question. The PEI department of agriculture has an arrangement with the dairy producers of PEI, as well as the PEI cattlemen's producers. They have a contract with Maritime Pet Foods to make sure that all dead stock are picked up and removed from the farm within 48 hours. Then, they

do the processing on that carcass. They ship the unused products to Quebec for rendering.

Our government is happy to partner with these two particular organizations. We contribute about \$350,000 to this cause.

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

Cost of dead stock removal

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What farmers are eligible to participate in this service and how much does it cost individual farmers?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: As I had mentioned earlier, our department has an arrangement with the dairy farmers of PEI, as well as the cattlemen's association. They work out an arrangement with our producers; in particular, it's a check-off based situation with the dairy farmers. The beef farmers have a, sort of, a prorated system where they pay so much. Once they go over their allotted amount per farm they pay \$100 per animal.

Anybody that happens to have a horse or sheep or pig, or some of those things, I guess pigs are actually composted, but they work out an arrangement directly with Maritime Pet Foods, Mr. Speaker.

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

Measures of dead stock removal procedure

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What measures are in place to ensure producers use the service and are there additional steps that can be taken to eliminate this problem?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, our department actually has regulations that prohibit the livestock from actually being buried on farm or disposed of in an improper manner. The reasons for that being that there are issues that would be of concern from a contamination of our water system, as well as the potential of attracting coyotes and other vermin. That's why we want all livestock that have passed away to be removed within 48 hours.

We feel that this is an appropriate measure to take place under this circumstance, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately, Islanders are no strangers to limited capacity and long waits at walk-in clinics. Seeing an opportunity, a local IT firm developed a service called Skip the Waiting Room that allowed residents to book an appointment online.

Skip the Waiting Room service

Question to the minister of health: How widely is this service used in the Island health care system?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This skip the waiting line was an app that was developed by an Island company. I believe they're currently at one Island clinic, but there are several other clinics that use alternate methods of forming waitlists by coming in and signing on; you can then leave the building, at least you'll know you're in the queue for that facility.

As well, ERs, across the province also provide the same type of walk-in service, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This service has proven very popular with over 6,000 Islanders using the service in 2017 at the downtown walk-in clinic in Charlottetown; one location. Maybe it's a money problem. Maybe that's why it's not being expanded to more locations.

Monthly cost for Skip the Waiting Room

A question to the finance minister: How much is the monthly cost to operate this service at a clinic?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: I'd have to find that question out and take it back to the House.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In my understanding is we're talking about, in the order of, a couple of hundred dollars a month to operate the service at a walk-in clinic. I understand that Skip the Waiting Room is being used in Ontario and Alberta with over 1,200 walk-in clinics across Canada. Maybe this is a way we could really help our rural areas in this province.

More implementation of Skip the Waiting Room

Question to the Minister of Rural and Regional Development: Why has this service not been implemented more widely across the Island health system?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The department and the government of the day worked very closely with this company as they were working to develop this program. This program has been well-utilized. The way it works is that there are a number of places where people can add their name to a waiting period. Some are provided early on, but there are others, who can walk in and add their names to the list, as well.

This is a very valuable tool that we had

earlier discussion on the floor of the House about possible expansions. We continue to look at that; if this is a program that can be expanded upon.

They did receive some funding early on. I think that has run its course now. They are a private business trying to do private work on Prince Edward Island. We're supportive of that, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to hear the health minister say he is supportive of this. He should be. It seems strange that a locally-developed technology has greater take-up off of PEI than on Prince Edward Island. This is a service that was developed using a grant of \$25,000 from Innovation PEI in January, 2015.

A question to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism: What's the roadblock to using this service more widely on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously these walk-in clinics all across Prince Edward Island provide wonderful and valuable service for Islanders that need this health care when they need it. Most of the doctors that run these facilities are fee-for-service doctors. They are private businesses; they run their own entities; they provide their own staff; they provide their own services and that's up to – we can check into see if that's something that doctors are looking at developing more in their clinics all across the Island, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This isn't a decision made by doctors; this is a decision made by clinics. This is something that has to be driven from the top. We need leadership from this government.

This is a solution that can be put in place very quickly and we found out on the floor that we're waiting, potentially, years for a big Cadillac solution to come into place that's going to potentially cost hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars.

So in the meantime, for example at the once-a-week Friday clinic in Hunter River, patients hoping to get one of the 12 spots line up outside at the door starting at 7:00 a.m. or earlier just to keep their spot in line. These are seniors, these are young parents, people who are ill and in the winter they're waiting out there in the freezing cold just to keep their spot in line.

Pilot project of Skip the Waiting Room

This is a question to the Premier: Will you commit to piloting the Skip the Waiting Room at clinics across rural PEI as soon as possible?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, we work very closely with this company that's designing this business. Obviously, Islanders need a walk-in service when they need it. Last year alone 90,000 people were seen at Island ERs all across our hospital facilities on Prince Edward Island. I don't have the data for these private companies, but I do need to say, these are private businesses by doctors that run these clinics fee-for-service. They determine what services they use and as I said earlier in the House, this is a discussion that we can continue on with this company to see if there's possibilities for them to expand in Island clinics because there is a need for people to be able to register for these clinics, whether it's walk-in, or whether it's online, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, your final question.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're getting two different stories. During budget estimates, the story was: We're not going to implement this Island-based system of Skip the Waiting Room; we're going to wait and we're going to put in a solution that

integrates with the broader information systems of the province.

Here today, now we're finding out, in fact, it's the clinics themselves that have to make the decision. But here we have a locally-developed technology. It's Islanders doing what this government says they want to encourage: a made-in-PEI solution. It's something that can be put in place quickly. It's something that will be effective; it'll keep Islanders out of the cold.

I just want to ask the minister of health: Will you commit to taking this technology that this government has invested in and implementing it right away at clinics like Hunter River?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to make it clear to the hon. member; the discussion that we were having on the floor of the Legislature last week was in regards to emergency medical records in regards to the systems used by pharmacies all across Prince Edward Island so that we have a fully-integrated system.

This can be part of a fully-integrated system with our skip the wait in line, but it doesn't necessarily need to be. This is something that could be stand-alone. We will continue to have those conversations, but this is a discussion that will be ongoing, as it was said on the floor of the Legislature last week.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]