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

FOR

THURSDAY, 10 MAY 2018



Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

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

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

CBSA investigators stated in their court approved search warrants the clear fact that residency fraud hurts the integrity of the Canadian immigration system, in fact, our entire country.

**Residency fraud and PNP program**

Question to the Premier: Premier, why has your government allowed widespread residency fraud to occur through the PNP program here on PEI?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to start on the point about reputation that was raised yesterday, and again today. It seems we only hear from the opposition on reputation when they're trying to pull it down.

We have, over a period of time, worked diligently and in response to advice and recommendations from the Auditor General –

**Mr. Trivers:** Worst province in Canada for cooking the books.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – to build up and improve our immigration pathways, including the investor immigrants and numerous other pathways, to the point where we're seen to be leaders in the country.

It would nice if the opposition would recognize, for once, the important role and the important achievements that our province has gained in this area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Obviously, the Premier continues to turn a blind eye to the facts that are out there.

CBSA investigators have filed federal charges because they have found evidence of residency fraud with false information provided to the federal government through an organized network.

**Files approved by government from PNP**

Premier, you've had three days now. How is it that your government only has files on 17 of the 566 immigrants approved through the PNP PEI program?

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

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

This is a very serious matter. We are working with border services to try to get to the bottom of this.

It is a federal program and federal charges are being laid. We understand – I understand that the people have provided incorrect information to border services. We are cooperating with border services on everything we can to help them get to the bottom of it.  
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

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

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

At least his minister acknowledges that it's a serious issue while the Premier still turns a blind eye to it.

CBSA sought a warrant for 16 Chancellor Street, the home of one of the charged individuals.

**PNP applicants at 16 Chancellor Street (further)**

Question to the Premier: Premier, how many PEI PNP clients do your records show at this address?

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

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

Again, this is a very serious matter and we are working with border services to try to get to the bottom of this. We're sharing all the information that we have to get to the bottom of this because we know that the information that has been provided to us is not the same information that was provided to border services. The federal department is looking into that and we're in full support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thanks, very much.

Mr. Speaker, 363 provincial PNP clients stated: 281 Brackley Point Road as their address.

#### **Listing of addresses for PNP clients**

Question to the Premier: How did no one in government notice hundreds of PNP clients all listing the same address?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic –

**Mr. Myers:** Where do they all park?

**Speaker:** – Development and Tourism.

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

Again, this is a serious matter. Border services, I believe, are the government agency that was receiving this same address as folks were crossing the border.

Our records show only 17 at the Sherwood address. That is – all information that we're sharing with border services. Anything we can do to help to get to the bottom of this, we are more than happy to cooperate and that's what we're doing.

Thank you.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Mr. Speaker, 205 provincial PNP clients stated 72 Beach Grove Road as their address; the two-story home of the other charged individual.

Question again, to the Premier: How many other addresses have hundreds of PEI PNP clients registered in your immigration records?

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

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

Border services has been receiving the common addresses. That is not something that was in the records that are provided to us.

We are cooperating fully with border services to provide all of the required information to get to the bottom of this because we know this is very serious.

We are going to continue to cooperate with the federal government in this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I heard the Premier speak earlier about how he somehow believes that we are leaders. We aren't leaders at all. We're a national embarrassment under his leadership and this government's PNP fraud file here.

The government actually knew about these serious incidents because CBSA sought and executed a search warrant on these properties in February, 2016 and laid charges only this week.

They knew. They've known for two years this was going on.

In the last three days, the minister here has been stating that border services has not shared any information with the province. He said it here today that the province is

cooperating with them. The province is provided them documentation.

**CBSA investing government re: residency fraud**

Question to the minister: Will you confirm that border services is, in fact, investigating you guys over residency fraud, as well?

**Mr. Fox:** That's right.

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

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

We know this is very serious and we are continuing to work with border services. We will provide all documentation that they require. They have access to our files and we're very happy to continue to work with them because this is very serious. We want to make sure we get to the bottom on it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I'm no lawyer, but carefully cooperating with somebody who is investigating you is probably the responsible thing to do. While the minister maybe trying to tell this House that they're cooperating. They don't have a choice. They're being investigated by the federal government.

The minister isn't partnered with the border services, at all; he is actually being investigated.

Question to the minister: Why do you not want Islanders to know that your government is being investigated by border services?

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

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

The investigation that's going on by border services, I understand, is towards two individuals and this relates back to an older

program that we have. We now have a new program, which has an expression of interest.

It works with immigrants and municipalities right across PEI to help increase population across PEI. We know that's one of the key pillars to our population growth, along with recruitment and retention.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

This minister has had two chances to tell Islanders that they're not being investigated by the federal government. They're being investigated by the federal government. All this complying that he's doing and all this cooperating and all this providing of documents is because he has to because federal agents have swarmed his office and said you have to give us this information.

There are 600 immigrants that this government vouched for that have lied and cheated their way into residency on Prince Edward Island and perhaps even a Canadian citizenship.

The Minister of Finance was responsible for immigration when border services executed this very warrant. He knew.

**Minister of Finance and fraud investigation**

Question to the Minister of Finance: Will you explain your knowledge and involvement over the two-year residency fraud investigation that has resulted in federal charges here on Prince Edward Island?

**An Hon. Member:** Good question.

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

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

As much as the member would want people to think that border services have swarmed our office, I can tell you they haven't been to the office when I'm there. I seem to be

there an awful lot. That is not something that has happened.

We take this matter very seriously. I don't know if the opposition does, but we certainly do and we're cooperating with border services and sharing all information that we have.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

So they're not in your office, but you're being investigated. There's no question that you're being investigated because part of the fraud that happened also was partly to do with your office. It goes both ways; 600 people lived in one house and you guys accepted them. Do you think border services is going to overlook that part of it and say: Oh, it's okay. They're government; they couldn't be crooked.

Concerns about the business stream were raised last fall. The now finance minister admitted that two thirds of the applicants last fall – he said that they had defaulted on their business deposits, but there was supposed to be good news. According to the minister, almost all the nominees are passing residency requirement, allowing them to keep their \$50,000.

#### **Applicants defaulting on business deposits**

Question to the finance minister: Do you still stand by your statement you made in November?

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

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

Border services are continuing to investigate this and we know this is very serious and we continue to cooperate with border services. This is very important and this is a federal program, these are federal charges, and the address that was given is to the federal border services. We continue to cooperate with all aspects of border services as they continue forward with this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

If I was being investigated for fraud, I would also cooperate. So thank you for cooperating while you're being investigated for fraud.

A direct quote from the finance minister when these concerns were raised months ago while he was immigration minister:

He said: One number that really stands out to us is our residency number. Even though they may default on their business applications and obligation, they are staying here.

#### **Trust of government in immigration program (further)**

Question to the minister: How could you say such a thing when you knew then that border services was investigating not only you, but your entire program?

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

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

Border services is not investigating our department but we continue to work with them as they work towards getting to the bottom of this very serious incident that we understand that immigrants were giving false information to border services with this federal program and we will continue to cooperate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

So somebody falsified documents, this government accepted them, took their money, and cashed their cheques, but it's all them. It's all somebody else who was doing the wrong thing, but this government thought 600 people could live in a motel in Sherwood. These people thought that 205 people could live in a house on Beach Grove

Road. Of course, because why couldn't 205 people live in a bungalow on Beach Grove Road.

The Minister of Finance was minister in 2016 when one of the last recorded dates of the search warrant was there. So this isn't a new program, this is a program that the finance minister took care of. So either this government is incompetent, or they're in cahoots with the people who are committing the residency fraud. No one knew anything; no one saw anything; no one said anything. That's the way this government looks at it. There's hundreds of missing records and potentially all kinds that are fully falsified.

Question to the finance minister: Which is it – is your government incompetent, or are you in cahoots with the people committing fraud?

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

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

This government is in cooperation with Canada border services as we continue to work with them so they can get to the bottom of this. We know this is very serious and we're taking this very serious and continue to work and share files with border services.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

So, selling 600 fake addresses to immigrants nominated for residency in the province no doubt generated a lot of money.

### **HST revenue from sale of fake addresses**

Question for the finance minister: How much HST revenue did the province receive from the sale of those fake addresses?

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

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

This is a serious matter and we are working with border services to get to the bottom of

this. The addresses were given to border services and this is a federal program that – through the immigration file – and we continue to work with border services to make sure we get to the bottom of this. This is very serious.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

### **Submission of taxes from fake addresses**

Question to the finance minister: Can you confirm whether or not the businesses in question submitted any taxes to the province on the sale of those fake addresses?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

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

I think we all know in the House and right across Prince Edward Island how important immigration is to PEI and what it's done over the past number of years to increase our population.

But I can tell you this that it is a federal program that is run by the federal government. We have to, as a province, follow the guidelines of the federal government and abide by those guidelines. The federal government audits the province, I believe it's every year, but I'm not 100% sure on that – every year on what we're doing here on PEI, how we're accepting clients, what those clients are actually doing. So, there are all kinds of checks and balances.

The opposition's trying to paint a picture here that is outside the realm of the provincial government. There's no content to it whatsoever. There's an organization here doing an investigation and that's good. Bring it on. If there's someone breaking the law then so be it. They need to pay the penalty.

**Mr. Myers:** You didn't do that with e-gaming.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

My question was about taxes and hopefully this government is collecting taxes from immigrants that come in through PNP program. Often if a business has outstanding HST owing, provincial sheriffs are engaged to collect it.

#### **Sheriffs engaged for tax collection**

Question to the finance minister: Were provincial sheriffs engaged to collect outstanding taxes from the business alleged to have sold 600 fake addresses to provincial nominees?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. MacDonald:** I think that's the whole essence of the investigation, Mr. Speaker, is that there was someone doing a wrong as far as what we're seeing from the federal agents. So for me to know that information, then I would know everything about the investigation, which I don't – which we didn't – and we're waiting on the cooperation between the provincial government and the Office of Immigration, immigration Canada, I'm sure, is a part of this as well and we'll wait and see what the results of those investigations are.

It's no threat to the Province of Prince Edward Island. If there are corrupt people out there, they need to be brought to justice and dealt with.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

Collection of tax revenue is really one way government could help determine if potential fraud and abuse was happening in the Provincial Nominee Program and indeed, close cooperation would be required between the province and the feds to make that happen.

#### **Assistance to federal authorities**

Question to the finance minister: What assistance is being provided to the federal

authorities on this investigation on the tax side of things?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. MacDonald:** First of all, if these individuals are breaking the law – I'm assuming that they're not likely filing taxes. I'm assuming that everything that they're doing is likely illegal, but I can tell you this: Whatever the federal government wants as far as our Office of Immigration, I'm sure the minister responsible would be more than willing to open the book on it because this party and this government, we have nothing to hide.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** They know how to get there; they've been there before.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Myers:** Wouldn't be the first time they investigated you guys.

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

It's pretty obvious to all Islanders that there's some funny business going on here with the PNP program. Many Islanders – they've heard about, they've read about, they've even seen firsthand start-up businesses being set up and closed solely to meet the requirements of the province's PNP program. We also know that provincial sheriffs are sometimes used to help collect outstanding tax revenue like HST owing to the province.

#### **Sheriffs engaged for tax collection (further)**

Question to the Attorney General: What direction has your department given to the provincial sheriffs around the collection of outstanding taxes from businesses involved in the PNP?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

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

Look, we treat an immigrant – which we're proud of – no different than we treat any other Islanders. They pay their taxes, we

collect their taxes, and if there are issues with that, there's a protocol in place to resolve those issues. It's not going to change for anybody. That's diversification in Prince Edward Island. That's why we're being so successful. We treat everybody equal.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

It's one thing to say you treat everybody equally and it's another thing to do that, and that's not what we're hearing.

Question to the Attorney General: Can you confirm that your government has advised sheriffs, provincial sheriffs, to take a hands-off policy when it comes to collecting outstanding tax revenue from PNP businesses so as not to raise suspicion or media attention?

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

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

That's quite an accusation coming from a member of this Legislature. I would be interested to know what proof the hon. member might have of that.

**Mr. MacKay:** We've got (Indistinct)

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** That said, what I will say about this is that our department, as far as I'm aware, has no knowledge of this investigation and we certainly have no knowledge of any sheriffs being directed in any way and I would say that the hon. member doesn't even have a great handle on the process to engage sheriffs in something like this.

This is long from something that sheriffs would ever be engaged to do. An order of the court would be required before that would ever happen.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) start with federal agents (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** We're at the stage of a warrant and investigation that's been filed in relation to a criminal matter.

I think we need to get the facts straight. I'd certainly encourage the opposition to do that.

**Mr. LaVie:** We know better now.

**Mr. J. Brown:** We'd be here to help them in any way that we can, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

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

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

Bees are a critical component of a healthy ecosystem and agricultural economy.

Last week in this House, the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries in response to questions from the Member from Vernon River-Stratford spoke in reassuring tones about the future of bees on Prince Edward Island. But, Island apiarists remain deeply concerned.

Very recently, the European Union passed a comprehensive ban on neonicotinoids, a class of insecticides shown to be harmful to bees and other beneficial insects.

#### **Alternative measures to neonicotinoid use**

A question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: If a similar ban on neonicotinoids were to be enacted here in Canada, what alternative measures are available to Island farmers to effectively protect their crops and would their use entail significant costs to those farmers?

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to pesticides and chemicals that are used on crops in Prince Edward Island or in Canada, we go by Health Canada's processes in determining what usages of those particular chemicals are used for and we will continue to do that as we move forward, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you.

Well, those insecticides and pesticides that we use here on Prince Edward Island used to be recorded. We used to know how much was sold and bought every year. But since 2014, there are no records of how much insecticide or pesticide has been sold here on Prince Edward Island. Back then it was over two million pounds were used or purchased.

### **Recorded sales of pesticides and insecticides**

A question to the minister: Why are these records not available to Islanders?

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, back a number of years ago there were some changes that were made that farmers now have to make sure that they document all the particular pesticides that they use on crops and that's the process that goes now. So, I think that's not actually under my department, but that's my understanding that our farmers do document all their pesticides, the days that they use them, what chemical that they do use. That would be the way we'd track that.

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

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

Ideally, we would be able to service all of our pollination needs with domestic bees from hives right here on Prince Edward Island and indeed, efforts are underway to expand our native bee colonies and I congratulate the department for that initiative. Thank you, minister.

### **Use of Island hives for pollination**

Minister: Would you consider creating an incentive or better yet, a requirement for growers here on PEI to use Island hives for pollination before reaching out to off-Island apiarists?

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

**Mr. Henderson:** That's a very good point and that's exactly what we're doing in the department.

We've actually had a course, I think, about a week ago where we happened to have, I think, there were 42 individuals that were interested in getting into the bee industry and the honey industry, and they've received some training.

We've also had a program that we've recently announced where we've encouraged expansions of hives in Prince Edward Island, and we've also put in place some very strict protocols for the importation of hives to make sure that our pollination occurs.

We are hopeful in the near future we will be self-sustained when it comes to pollination on Prince Edward Island and bee production.

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

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

Agricultural diseases can be devastating to whole sectors of the industry and here on PEI we only have to look back to PVYn in potatoes and BSE in cattle for recent examples of that.

Enormous efforts are taken to prevent such outbreaks and strict quarantine measures put in place should one occur. The impacts of these outbreaks can be shattering for farmers, both economically and emotionally, and the effects of that can last for years and years.

### **Protection for farmers re: disease outbreak**

A question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: If you were aware of such a potentially devastating disease in any part of the agricultural sector, would you use all means possible to protect Island farmers from such an outbreak?

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, it's my responsibility to make sure that we protect those commodities and these industries and sectors within our industry that they're able to flourish and thrive and that they're able to compete on a global marketplace, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Last year, New Brunswick suffered from a severe outbreak of small hive beetle from hives imported from Ontario, where they had been previously inspected and deemed to be clean. Some beekeepers here on Prince Edward Island are deeply concerned about the relative lack of controls on movements of bees within Ontario and the fact that small hive beetle remains present on the trucks used to transport those bees between one part of Ontario and another.

#### **Protection for beekeepers from small hive beetle**

Minister: Can you assure those Island apiarists that PEI will not be vulnerable to such an infestation?

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, the question that the hon. member mentioned a little earlier was the real reason why we have now put in place a chief veterinarian within our department so they can make sure that they implement all the proper biosecurity measures and all the protocols that advise our department to make sure that we're reducing the potential risk that has occurred.

So when we look at the situation of the importation of bees into Prince Edward Island, we've implemented some very strict protocols around the region within certain provinces that we will import bees. We've increased the inspections and in fact, we will be sending our own inspectors to Ontario, or wherever the location is that bees could be imported from, to make sure that they're free from small hive beetle.

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

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

Bee hives for pollination are imported right at that time when the small hive beetle larvae are crawling out of the beehives to pupate deep in the soil, and also when the adult beetles can fly for over five kilometres, which they did in New Brunswick last year.

Minister: What is your plan to deal with this pest if it is indeed introduced to Prince Edward Island?

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Exactly, Mr. Speaker.

It's very important that we do have the proper protocols in place just in case something ever happened that we can destroy hives immediately and I think that's a key component of this. Anybody that's thinking about exporting beehives to Prince Edward Island, if they happen to have any identification or detection of small hive beetle, we can immediately destroy the entire truckload of hives, and we're working with the Department of Communities, Land and Environment to make sure that those protocols will be put in place and implemented immediately, should we find anything.

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

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

My question is to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

In 2015, government committed to building a new manor in Montague due to the Riverview Manor being almost 50-years old. Last summer, it was announced that ground was broken and construction was underway, meaning sometime soon the manor should be completed.

#### **Completion date of new manor in Montague (further)**

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

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

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

We're very happy that we were able to do investments in the community of Montague to replace the existing manor, which was over 50-years old. Things are progressing very well on that particular construction project and we expect that to be completed by the winter of 2019.

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

#### **Adjustments and design of new manor (further)**

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

Minister, will this building be larger and accommodate more seniors in Montague, and were there any changes made with the engineering of this building in comparison to previous that were constructed?

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

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

We're investing \$15 million in this particular project in the community of Montague. It's a 49-bed long-term care facility.

We did meet with the community there and had a chance for them to look at the plans –

**Ms. Compton:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** – as we proceeded with going forward on that –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** – and it's broken up into three small rooms that have 12 in each section. Then, there is another section that has 13, and one of those includes a respite care bed so that the –

**Leader of the Opposition:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** – residents will have opportunities for all private rooms.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I know that the construction of this property is going to be very much welcomed in Montague. People are interested. They're driving by the site. They're looking at what's going on. I know that they're keen to see this completed.

#### **Transition of manor to department of health**

Minister: When will your department be handing the manor into the hands of the department of health so that the manor will be opened for residents to move into?

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

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

That is a process that takes place once the construction is completed. From our department we will hand the keys over to department of health so that they can proceed to moving residents in. There is a whole process that that takes place.

We expect in the winter of 2019 to be able to hand those keys over. Then, that process, through Health PEI, will start to transition the residents from one area to another and to train staff and to make them familiar with the new site that they're going to be working in so that residents have a smooth transition from one site to another, and a brand new home.

Thank you.

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

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

My question is to the minister of health. I'm hearing a lot in the media and from constituents about ophthalmology.

**Ophthalmologist complement on PEI**

Can you tell me, what is the current complement of ophthalmologists on PEI?

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

**Mr. LaVie:** Good question.

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

On the Island we have a full complement of seven ophthalmologists here in the province. We're very fortunate to have seven. Ophthalmologists are doctors that take care of special needs in Islanders' eyes whether it surgical, or whether it's medical.

Currently, out of that complement of seven, three provide surgical needs. Four provide non-surgical needs.

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

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

Minister, there are many Islanders waiting for eye surgery, and I have been told that we have an ophthalmologist, who is going on leave.

**Wait list for eye surgery**

Can you give us an impact on how this will impact surgeries?

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

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

The hon. member is correct. Recently, Dr. Sefau has indicated that he will be taking a six-month leave of absence for personal reasons.

We currently are in the process of hiring a locum to handle the cares that Dr. Sefau is looking at. Because this was fairly quick in nature any of Dr. Sefau patients who required post-treatments are being handled by the other six ophthalmologists that we have serving us here.

As soon as we can get a locum recruited we will work with Dr. Sefau's patients. In the meantime, one of our ophthalmologists is triaging those patients for anybody that may very urgent needs right away.

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

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

Minister: What about people, who do not need surgery, but still require the support of an ophthalmologist. Who is looking after them?

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

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

The other six ophthalmologists are working collaborative together to take on the needs of the patients of Dr. Sefau. We also have asked for the services of a community-based ophthalmologist to assist us here, as well.

Quite frankly, I have to compliment the six ophthalmologists on Prince Edward Island, who are stepping up to the plate to take those needs of Islanders, who find themselves in a situation that nobody anticipated to take care of their eye needs; their surgical needs, their medical needs. I really have to compliment all ophthalmologists on PEI for stepping up to the plate, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

We're talking about the suicide prevention strategy earlier in this House session and its delay. We've been asking when it's coming. In the meantime, tragedies are still happening.

**Admission and discharge of self-harm patients**

Question to the health minister: What policies are currently in place around admissions and discharges for hospital patients, who have a history of self harm?

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

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

When it comes to regards of our suicide strategy, as I stated earlier on the floor of the Legislature, we are very near to those completions of that review. I hope that that would be able to brought forward, I'll say, in the next few days. I'd be very proud and pleased to bring that to the floor of the Legislature.

Currently, when it comes to needs of Islanders suffering from mental health issues, we have a very good complement now of psychiatrists, who are able to see those having needs. They assess what needs to be there, and they work very closely with the patient to see that their needs are being met, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I'd actually asked what policies were currently in place around the admissions and discharges for hospital patients.

Earlier this year, an individual with a history of self harm went missing the QEH during an unsupervised leave. She has yet to be found.

### **Unsupervised leave from QEH**

How does a patient with a history of self harm come to be granted an unsupervised leave from the hospital?

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

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

Our great complement of psychiatrist work very closely with patients of those needs. Patients that are looking to go on day passes, they are assessed by psychiatrists. They are determined about they'd be getting along; how they'd been improving; how they'd been progressing. These are unfortunate

circumstances, sometimes, if a patient leaves and befalls something of a serious nature.

Psychiatrists do their best to assess these patients to determine, yes, they've improved to the point where they're allowed to go out in society. They're not held in captivity in our facilities. These are Islanders that need to interact with others, need to interact with their families. Yes, that they should be allowed those processes when they ask for them, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

This individual has previously attempted to commit suicide while on an unsupervised leave from the hospital. The individual's family had expressed concerns about the person's safety because of that.

### **Safety concerns from patients' families**

Question to the health minister: What weight is given to patient safety concerns received from the patient's family?

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

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

I can't speak to specific cases, of course, on the floor of the Legislature. I do know that psychiatrists do their work with great due diligence. They assess their patients by how they're improving. If they see improvements they are allowed to do regular practices that they would normally do; leave the facility; go out to dinner; visit their family.

The psychiatrists spend a lot of time with these patients. When they see improvements they need to indicate that this is the right health treatment for these individuals. And that's the way they do it.

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

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

Between September and March we had a severe shortage of psychiatrists in the

province. Things were at such a point that entire shifts would go without any psychiatric coverage for patients admitted to Unit 9 and the Hillsborough Hospital or presenting at the emergency room in crisis.

The patient, who went missing during an unsupervised leave, left the QEH on January 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Incidences re: lack of proper psychiatric coverage**

Question to the minister of health: Is your government aware of any other incidences where patient safety may have been impacted by the lack of proper psychiatric coverage?

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

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

Certainly, we are quite pleased and quite proud that we were able, through recruitment and retention, go out and recruit four new psychiatrists.

I said before, we were struggling and having challenges six months ago, but today we have four new psychiatrists working on Prince Edward Island providing stable service to those who need mental health issues.

We'll continue to make those strategic investments in this area and try to recruit some more psychiatrists, but when it comes to patient health care, we have to make strategic investments of all kinds. This year alone, we are investing \$4 million into mental health care on Prince Edward Island.

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

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

We know these are difficult issues to discuss. They're difficult questions to answers and they're difficult questions to ask. We know that the mental health staff that we do have are working hard to care for patients, but they're understaffed and under-resourced. But the only way that our quality of care will improve is to recognize these mistakes, learn from them, and take corrective action to avoid them in future.

**Improvements to health care**

Another question to the minister of health: What are we doing as a government to learn from situations like this to improve care for future?

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

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

The hon. member is right. Those working in our mental health field on Prince Edward Island are doing great work.

We continue to make strategic investments in regards to our children with supports in our schools so that we can catch things that are early on that are giving our very young people troubles; our youth, through our Strength and INSIGHT Programs, being able to work with them, strategic investments there that are going to have great success.

When it comes to our other populations – walk in clinics that have been providing valuable services. These are investments that we are making in mental health. We will see successes from these, Mr. Speaker, but as I said on many occasions, there are no overnight solutions. We keep moving forward, we keep getting better, and we continue to do that as we move into the future, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]