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

FOR

TUESDAY, 29 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.

Having access to secure blood and plasma supplies is key to a well run health system.

For-profit blood and plasma sales

Question to the Premier: What is your government's policy towards for-profit blood and plasma sales?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to Islanders, whether you're donating to the Queen Elizabeth foundation hospital telethon this weekend, where Islanders donated over \$535,000 out of their pockets, or whether it comes in the donating blood and plasma, Islanders are always there to step up to supply this service.

Supplies that are collected here on Prince Edward Island, whether it's blood or plasma are sent to Halifax to the national blood bank over there where they are held safely until such time as they are needed by any individual.

But when we do require blood services we also go to the same bank to have blood come back to PEI for our use.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, rules around for-profit blood and plasma sales differ across Canada. For example, Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, now BC, have all banned the practice. But, private clinics exist in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Question to the Premier: Does your government support for blood profit and plasma sales?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, over the years Canadian Blood Services handled that duty for us on Prince Edward Island, and handled it well.

There have been discussions about blood services. I'm sure we'll have a conversation on that at our national health ministers in the coming weeks.

We want to work to protect our blood service. We want to make sure that blood is available to Islanders at times when they need it.

Working with the national blood bank in Halifax has been a very good relationship, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The Canadian Plasma Resources, a for-profit blood, plasma company has applied to Health Canada for licensing of a new clinic in Moncton.

We've heard recently that the New Brunswick government has not opposed the application.

Moncton clinic and PEI blood donation

Question to the Premier: How would a for-profit clinic in Moncton affect voluntary blood donation here on PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, I'm sure there will be discussion in the following weeks in regards to blood services all across every province of our wonderful country.

I recall fondly an article. It was about a year ago that one of our Island residents, a gentleman by the name of Ewen Stewart from the Premier's district actually, was in

the local media, where he had, at that point in time, and I think it was about close to a year ago, he had given 900 donations, at that point, of blood and plasma –

Ms. Casey: Great man.

Mr. Mitchell: – just a wonderful testament of how Islanders feel when it comes to donating for health care of others in our province.

I'm sure, by this time, Ewen has probably even reaching close to the 1,000 donation mark. Most of those donations, I understand were of plasma. He began with blood donation, but switched over to plasma a significant number of years ago.

Another wonderful testament to a wonderful Islander taking care of his neighbours, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Over the last few years, the Canadian Plasma Resources lobbied several provinces about its plans around for-profit blood and plasma sales in Canada.

The minister speaks about Ewen Stewart and I agree, he is a very generous Islander and there are many Islanders that do donate for free.

But unfortunately, what we've seen is when you have for-profit organizations come into play, the blood that they collect and pay for could be shipped anywhere around the world, thus compromising our supply here.

For-profit blood and plasma sales (further)

Again, question to the Premier: How many times has your government been lobbied to support for increased for-profit blood and plasma sales?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, in my time, as health minister, I have not been lobbied. I have not had any meetings in this regard.

But, as Prince Edward Island, as a province, as Islanders, we are leaders in a lot of areas. The method that we use for blood collection; blood supply; blood transfusions, when we need it, it's effective for Islanders. We don't have to follow on courses or paths of other provinces. We can carve out our own way again on this one, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Concern exists that if a potential blood donor had a choice between making a voluntary donation and being paid to give blood that voluntary donations to the public system could be compromised, and in the end would drop.

Banning for-profit blood and plasma donations

Question to the Premier: Will you stand here today and clearly state that your government will ban for-profit corporations here on PEI paying for blood and plasma donations?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, the process that we have in place for Islanders works, and it works well.

Islanders, from all walks of life go, donate blood during their lunch hours. Once, as soon as they get out of their place of work; it's a practice that's age-old in our province.

I know myself, my nephew, at one point in time, needed to have plasma donations for his lifesaving cures that he needed. It was there.

Islanders step up day after day to provide this wonderful service on Prince Edward Island, voluntarily and will continue that in the future, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On Friday, I asked again for all of the environmental test results for the Three Oaks project to be publicly released.

Publicly release of all test results from TOSH (further)

Question to the transportation minister: Do you have that information with you to table and publicly release today?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We do expect that to be able to be posted within the next few days. It's something we've just finished reviewing. Those results will be put up when they're done being reviewed.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On Friday, I asked why mold isn't being tested for at Three Oaks, and we didn't get an answer.

Testing of mould at TOSH (further)

Question to the transportation minister: Why isn't mold being regularly tested for at Three Oaks during this lengthy \$24 million renovation when dozens of students are reporting environmental health issues?

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

Mr. LaVie: Oh, mould.

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

As I said, last week, when there were questions about Three Oaks high school and the renovation and air testing that's going on there, there has been testing going on and

there's been an environmental specialist that's been in there with expertise in that area, that's recommended the testing that might occur.

In addition to that, there has been an ad hoc committee that has been struck from members of the community, together with folks from TIE; folks from the Public Schools Branch; folks from the school and they have set out additional testing recommendations or asks that they would like to see.

We're doing all them and we're making those results available to them. The minister just committed to making those available publicly online, as well.

I think we're doing everything that we've been asked to do so far and we'll continue to work with the community to do our best.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On Friday, I asked why all of the environmental test results weren't being shared with parents, and was told that the principal had all the information.

When parents followed up with the school, the principal said he did not have the test results.

Testing results shared with parents of TOSH (further)

Question to the transportation minister: Were you just guessing when you said that, or are you deliberately not being forthright in the House?

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) she doesn't want to answer –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) answer it –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) remember?

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

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

As I had previously indicated, there has been an ad hoc committee that's been struck that's been working together with or, is constituted of members of the school, including, it's my understanding, the principal; members from TIE and the construction crew that manages the construction there at Three Oaks, from the Public Schools Branch and from the community.

They have set out the testing that's to be done. The testing information comes back and is reported back through that group, back into the school community. As the minister has indicated, we're going to make an effort to make that information available to the public.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A contact number was supplied with the transportation department to call about the information they've been trying to get for weeks and months now.

Communications officer contact and test results

My question is to you transportation minister: Why would parents be given your communications officer as the contact to call about getting environmental test results from Three Oaks?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) information.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We work very closely with the Public Schools Branch; the school staff. We have one of our TIE staff onsite there working together. Any information that they may not be able to get from the Public Schools

Branch they certainly are encouraged to call department of transportation –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) communications officer.

Ms. Biggar: – and we will work with them and provide whatever information we need to through the school and the school, in turn, are working together with the parents.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now that we have the transportation minister on her feet, we'll ask another question. You told the House that the school had all the test results available for parents. The school told the parents they didn't have the results and to call the minister's communication shop.

Testing results shared with parents of TOSH (further)

Question to the transportation minister: Why can't students and parents get a straight answer out of your government?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, as we noted last week, those tests from April just came back. We will be finished reviewing them and they will be posted and then everybody can see them.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If all this double talk is any indication, I'm not surprised there were 250 people at our District 23 nomination in Summerside last week. All of these delays, denials, and double talk are eroding any faith parents have that government has their best interests first.

Publicly release of all test results from TOSH (further)

Question to the transportation minister: If all environmental test results are as good as you say, then why not publically release them and be done with it?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was great to see a great crowd out all across PEI come into District 23, a great district. We're doing lots of great work there. I can understand why they want to come and see what's happening and what the MLA has done there.

Mr. Speaker, again, I noted that those results will be put up on our website and they will be publicized.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ownership of land and amalgamation proposal

Question to the Premier: Why is land owned by your brother located at the center of the proposed North Shore, Pleasant Grove, Grand Tracadie amalgamation – the only land within the boundaries not included in the amalgamation proposal?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I'm glad that the hon. member asked about amalgamation proposal because as we left off in committee of the whole on that bill of his last week, he said he was going to go out to the North Shore and tell them all how to do their business or maybe even to persuade them to back away from amalgamation. I'm very proud of what the people in the communities of Pleasant Grove, Grand Tracadie, and the North Shore have done to put forward that proposal and I'm sure that will be dealt with in due course.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have a map of the proposed amalgamation area. I'd like to table later on and, indeed, really, the only land is 60 acres in the middle of the boundaries that belongs to the Premier's brother that is not included in the amalgamation proposal.

Mr. Myers: Crooked.

Mr. Trivers: Question to the Premier: Have you personally spoken to your brother about this proposed amalgamation?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that my great grandfather and great grandmother purchased a farm on the top of the hill at Stanhope in 1864 and that it's still in the family and that that land reaches from Covehead Bay right back to the Friston Road and because of the way the school districts were configured – which is how those boundaries were drawn – there is, indeed, a piece of that land that was not included in the North Shore community –

Mr. Myers: You can't incorporate (Indistinct).

Premier MacLauchlan: – when the North Shore community was put together and the question of including that land within –

Mr. Myers: If only your last name's MacLauchlan, they don't amalgamate you. It's okay for me.

Premier MacLauchlan: – this goes back to 1864, Mr. Speaker – long time before some people across the floor were around here and the question of incorporating that land within the amalgamation is, indeed, being dealt with.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, when the Municipal Affairs staff went out to present at a public meeting of area residents, the

question of why the 60 acre parcel of land right in the center of the proposed amalgamation boundaries was raised. Why was it left out? Staff were unable to answer the question.

Public meeting re: North Shore and amalgamation

A question to the Premier: Were you at that public meeting?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I took part in a public meeting. I wasn't there at the time that question was asked or if it – it may have been at another meeting. There were several meetings about this.

Let me go back to what I said, Mr. Speaker. This derives from when those school district boundaries were drawn to capture or to provide schooling for students who could walk the distance of a mile to the schoolhouse. There were no students on the land in question going in whatever direction they might go and it's one of those historic anomalies and I remind the House of what I said before: This is land that goes back that's in the same family since 1864 and it's been used productively and it's produced a lot of MacLaughlans since that time and I'm proud to be one of them.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, I'm very confused. The Premier talks about history; he talks about the MacLauchlan family name; the (Indistinct) with the land; the fact remains, we've got an amalgamation proposal and the whole area is being amalgamated and annexed except for 60 acres of the Premier's brother's land.

Mr. Myers: Oh, no.

Mr. Trivers: Premier, let's have some straight talk here.

Land omitted from amalgamation

Question to the Premier: Can you tell the House why your brother's land was the only piece of land to be omitted?

Mr. Myers: Good question. Didn't happen in Three Rivers.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, Stanhope first had a school district in 1851 –

Mr. Myers: Oh, we're back to 1851. Can't we jump to the 1870s at least?

Premier MacLauchlan: – and that was about the same time as Prince Edward Island was the first jurisdiction in the commonwealth – the empire at the time – to have a free education act under a liberal government. Because there were no students on whatever that acreage is that were included within the school district; that remains an anomaly. That remains an anomaly, and I'm happy – I don't know why there'd be any confusing across the floor. I heard one member across the floor say last week that nothing had changed in 150 years and nothing would change in the next 150 years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Yes, that was you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Myers: Doing crooked work.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government, led by this Premier, is going out across the Island. They put in a new *Municipal Government Act* and they're saying that annexation is good for Islanders. They want to see annexation happen across this entire Island; however, it appears that annexation is not good enough for the MacLauchlan family in Covehead.

Question to the hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Why are you running around telling Islanders that amalgamation and annexation is good for them when it's not good enough for the Premier's brother?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Member from Rustico-Emerald left us with the impression here last week that he was going to go out and straighten out the people in the North Shore and Pleasant Grove and Grand Tracadie as what were all the disadvantages of amalgamation, but apparently he doesn't know his geography very well.

Mr. Myers: More like Wes Sheridan (Indistinct).

Premier MacLauchlan: The MacLauchlan family is in Stanhope. There's a school district in Grand Tracadie to the east, there's a school district in Pleasant Grove to the south, there's a school district in Covehead Road to the south and all of those school districts, there's a piece of property that was not included when those school districts were created and there was no reason to change it through all of the changes in the schools, through the changes in the community, through the creation of a CIC.

I may, indeed, perhaps when the member brings his bill on, take a little more time to give him the history lesson because he shouldn't be confused. He's been on the floor here pretending he knows all about amalgamation and he can't even find his way out to Stanhope.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Unlike the Premier and this government, I don't play favourites. Every Islander is equal to the official opposition here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, if this government would take the time to read Bill No. 111, they would find that it will only make the *Municipal Government Act* stronger and give unincorporated Islanders a voice, regardless of whether their name is MacLauchlan or anything else.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, I just want to know: Why does the Premier think that the rules don't apply to him and his family?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

An Hon. Member: In 1870 anyway.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: - Let me be very clear that the reason the hon. member knows about this is because when they went to do the amalgamation –

Mr. Myers: In 1850 or right now?

Premier MacLauchlan: – they discovered this anomaly that is 160 years, 170 years duration, and it was asked and brought up and it's in the public record, which is how the hon. member knows about it, and the matter is being dealt with. That will not hold up the amalgamation and I can assure you when it comes to the question of the MacLauchlans in community, we were school trustees, we were on the CIC, we've been on the municipal council –

Mr. Myers: Why are you crooked now?

Premier MacLauchlan: – and we're in favour of amalgamation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: Why are you acting crooked now?

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over a week ago, we debated bill 36, *An Act to Amend the Health Services Act*. Back then, the board of Health PEI was still in place and we were discussing what potential impacts the bill might have on government structures, accountability and clarity of roles. The Minister of Health and Wellness said this: They, the amendments will create stronger linkages to the community and clearly define the roles and responsibility for both the ministry and the health authority.

The amendments have been discussed with the board chair and the board members.

Resignation of Health PEI board (further)

Minister, back then there was no indication from you that the board was upset in any way, yet within days the entire board has resigned en masse.

How could this happen?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) questions.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I alluded to last week, the day that the board decided to step away, it was indeed a disappointing day. I had had conversation with them. We were going to move forward in a new direction with clear roles provided for myself as minister, for them as a board, and for the relationship with CEO.

They saw it differently from the day I spoke to them on Thursday til Tuesday of the next week. But, as of today, I had a great meeting with our executive leadership team. We see new opportunities ahead, working together, working collaboratively. We will be moving forward on appointing a new trustee that will take over the role of the board in the very near future. I see tremendous opportunities for improvements and efficiencies in Islanders' health care, providing safe, quality health care for the future, Mr. Speaker.

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

Work of Health PEI board

Ms. Bell: That same day, the Leader of the Third Party asked this: Minister, you mentioned that you had discussions with the board and how did that go? In response, he said: We had a great discussion. Obviously the board has been doing exemplary work.

Minister, do you still stand by those remarks?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The board had been doing a tremendous amount of work and I do applaud them for the work that they have done in the past.

The new direction was not the direction they wanted to go in. I can respect the wishes of the board members, but at the day – I was hopeful that we could all work together so that Islanders can expect that safe and high-quality care that they do deserve and that we as an entity of three, the board, myself, and the CEO, could provide that service in good confidence for all Islanders, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is abundantly clear that both the Health PEI board and the government were taken by surprise by how this debacle has unfolded.

Long-term plan for Health PEI

Minister, do you have a long-term plan to fix this?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is not a debacle. This is democracy. This is directions that we sometimes take in government, and we hope that all Islanders appreciate that and respect that.

In this case, we have a very clear path for it. We will be appointing a trustee. We will be forming a new board where that will include intensive and complete community engagement. We have two community engagement councils on PEI. Both of those chairs, as part of the new act, will have two seats on the new board and that leaves five members that we'll be looking at and we will be using Engage PEI for those processes.

Quite honestly, I have had many calls to the office and discussions with people who are interested in stepping up, with very solid backgrounds that can see a great vision for Island health care with a new board moving in a new direction, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

As the minister just stated, the first phase of that clear path following the sudden mass resignation of the Health PEI board is for that minister to appoint a trustee.

That has some uncomfortable echoes of the pathway taken when the school board was disbanded by government in 2015, and the PSB was established with trustees taking over the roles and responsibilities of the former board.

After only a very short time on the job, one of those trustees resigned saying this in a letter to the Premier: Your government has taken the credit for no school closures by ignoring the decisions of the school board of trustees. I have no faith that the other board recommendations will be handled any differently. This experience has been an incredible display of personal disrespect by every member of your Cabinet –

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – therefore, I am submitting my resignation as a school board trustee, effective immediately.

Trustee in place for Health PEI (further)

To the Minister of Health and Wellness: How can you reassure Islanders that we will not end up in a similar place with Health PEI this time?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The path of appointing a trustee was not the path that I had intended when we were making the changes. I had conversations with the board. I expected that the board would stay on in their role, but when they

decided to put in their resignations we were forced to enact using the trustee clause of the act, of either act; the new act or the old act. That's a provision put in place for cases of this nature.

It was my hope and my wish that the existing board, or at least some of the existing board, would be there to move forward in this new direction. It's not a path that I intended to use, but it's the only path that's presented to me now to appoint a trustee, a trustee with a good, solid background and knowledge in this area that will help us to move to the new transition of a new board, with new vision, for Islanders to be provided the best possible, safe, quality health care on our Island.

We're committed to doing that, and we'll continue with that work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Last Thursday, you cited a number of things that the board had done to justify the situation we find ourselves in and indeed, some might say, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition said in his series of questions last week: You threw them under the bus.

Islanders applying to Health PEI board

Minister, given some of the harsh comments that you have made regarding the Health PEI board since they resigned, how do you expect other Islanders to come forward now to fill those positions?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, this is not a path that I intended to take. But, there are lots of Islanders stepping up to take on this new role. Conversations are being had in regards to identifying a trustee to take over the role of the board, but I can tell you emails are coming in. Phone calls are coming in. People are very interested in being part of a board. They feel that Islanders' health care needs need to be

met, and they need to be met effectively, efficiently. There are lots of credible Islanders with tremendous credentials stepping up to take on this role.

I am very excited about it. It's a new opportunity for PEI health care to take a new direction, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

History would suggest that this is not going to end well, and it's my sense, having spoken to a large number of Islanders since the board resigned, that they don't trust government to fix this problem.

Avoidance of trustee resignation

Minister, how are you going to avoid another appointed trustee leaving saying, as the departing school trustee did: I was basically thrown under the bus by your government.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said earlier, I think it is so imperative that the health board of Prince Edward Island, the minister, and the CEO of Health PEI, are all working collectively. We all have to be on the same path. We can't be running down paths individually on our own. When we do – and we suggested or talked about that's not the path of government – let's look at other paths; we hope that's what happens.

When a new board is selected, those paths will be picked out. They will be worked on together collaboratively, cooperatively, so that we have good outcomes for health care for Islanders and a good vision for how we want to see health care in Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is for the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Minister, domestic violence is a serious issue. It's heartbreaking to hear of families who are suffering. Although some families are able to get on a path to overcome their situation, there are more families that need support.

Supports for families dealing with domestic violence

Minister, what supports can families expect from your department to assist them in dealing with domestic violence?

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

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

There are a number of supports for victims of family violence both across government and in our community here on Prince Edward Island.

I would encourage anyone experiencing family violence to reach out to a professional and to get some help. In this difficult situation, victim services in my justice department is a great place to start. There are professionals there that have the training that's required. They also have networks that they can contact such as, family violence prevention services. Excuse me, or Anderson House.

First and foremost, we would encourage anybody in that situation to reach out.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, sometimes external factors prevent people from leaving a violent situation.

Lease agreement and domestic violence

I'll give you an example; if a person is bound by a lease agreement, moving becomes difficult. Would you consider adding an option in the legislation for

breaking a lease agreement if a tenant were in a situation of domestic violence?

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

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

The direct answer to that is yes. The further answer is that we have, actually, at this point in time, been in contact with, I believe it's the director of residential tenancies at IRAC to get a better understanding of what might be entailed in developing legislation to do just that.

We are going through a process to do that right now. When we have draft legislation prepared, we would envision taking it to public consultations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, this is great news. I know this is a priority for you since you have taken over this portfolio. I'm glad to hear that there's some action on this.

Changes in legislation to assist families

When can we expect to see changes in the legislation to assist families dealing with domestic violence?

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

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

As I indicated in the previous response to the member's questions, we are actively in the process right now of looking what might be entailed in this sort of legislative change. We envision that as soon as we are able to get a handle on that, we would be preparing legislation and then going out for some consultation on it.

What I will say is, there is help for these individuals that are experiencing family violence right now. If there is anybody in that situation they should be contacting

somebody. Again, we have folks at Victim Services that are capable of providing that kind of service. There are great community services, as well, that we can direct people to.

With professional help, victims of family violence can implement a safety plan. We can help them through the issues that they're facing.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was thinking that all of those individuals residing at the Sherwood hotel must have a place to work if any were actually living on PEI.

On the top floor of Sims restaurant there are a series of empty offices with various business names on their doors. I know there are many more at other locations.

Phony business companies re: PNP

Question to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism: How many phony business shell companies are there in the province related to the immigrant investor program?

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

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) Sims.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If the member across is talking about the federal investigation, we are happy to –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – help the feds if they need any information. We'll be happy to provide that.

While, I'm here, I'd like to talk about the other 98% of the program that we have. We have newcomers coming to the province that are creating new jobs. They're creating businesses and they're filling labour gaps. 74% of the newcomers that come to PEI

now are employee-driven, employer-driven and they fill vacancies right here on PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Biggar: Must be (Indistinct)

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is known that many immigrants do not stay on PEI, but settle in larger centres such as Toronto and Vancouver. Those who do stay prefer to stay in Charlottetown are not interested in rural PEI.

Immigrant application requirements

Question to the minister: Will you police and remove the ability of immigrants to use shell companies to satisfy immigrant application requirements?

Ms. Biggar: We've got one moving to Tyne Valley.

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

Mr. Myers: Let's go back (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: Our newcomers are happy to go anywhere in PEI.

Mr. R. Brown: Kensington.

Mr. Palmer: They are working through communities now through a community endorsement model, where they are working with companies. They're going to see them. They're talking about their business plans. They're getting an endorsement from the communities.

Communities are very happy to do that. They're trying to grow their population. They're trying to bring new money into the community. We can see it; new housing sales; car sales. We see that our exports are the highest they've been four record years in a row.

And also in tourism, also four years in a row are records.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: Get out of Charlottetown and see what's happening.

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

Immigrant businesses in rural PEI

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, will you put a program in place that requires these new citizens to actually purchase or create real businesses, preferably in rural Prince Edward Island? I'd like to see them buying rural businesses instead of having an empty office at Sims.

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If the member would like me to go over with the details of the program that we have out today that do that, I'd be happy to do that for him.

The community endorsement model has our newcomers going to communities right across PEI; working with those communities to identify business opportunities and find ways that they can invest in those communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Housing is an issue that impacts both rural and urban communities across PEI.

Housing Supply Task Force re: housing issues

Question to the family and human services minister: How will your department's Housing Supply Task Force bring a rural lens or perspective to housing issues in this province?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am grateful for that question because any chance I can get to get to my feet and talk about housing on Prince Edward Island, and this government's commitment to improving housing on Prince Edward Island, especially for those most vulnerable.

We do recognize and we do appreciate that Islanders are in need. They are in need of housing. Housing is a very important support for Islanders that will help them, not only with their basic needs, but to become healthy and productive citizens.

I think, just taking a look at our last budget –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Mundy: – that we just produced here a couple of –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Mundy: – weeks ago, shows our commitment, a \$17 million investment of the next two years to improve housing on Prince Edward Island and to reduce homelessness.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We all realize that with the aging population, the need and the demand for housing in rural communities is growing, and different housing, not just their own homes.

Rural housing needs

What research or data does your department have on rural housing needs in the province?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Part of the engagement process around the whole housing – provincial housing action plan did have the rural lens.

We have members of the housing task force that live in the rural community. We have members of the co-development team that live in rural communities. My department, has been working with MLAs, some sitting on the opposite side of the House, as well as on this side that have been engaging in surveys with their communities to get that rural feedback, to get that rural lens that will help guide us in our housing – in our housing action plan.

I will, actually, even applaud the hon. member for working with our department to promote a survey that I see that she had on Facebook just this weekend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, I did post a survey – a lot of questions in the district about housing and how we can attract young people. Through the whole threat of school closure, what we discovered in our community was in order to have young people come, there needs to be housing and there just aren't that many houses out there or apartments out there.

Housing Supply Task Force and rural communities

I'm wondering, minister, will the Housing Supply Task Force have recommendations on how opportunities can be created for young families to move to rural communities.

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

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, actually today is the last meeting for our co-development team and they are reviewing a lot of the feedback that they've received. We have online surveys; we had paper surveys. We connected with municipalities; we connected with co-housing organizations; we connected with our community partners; we connected with Islanders to hear their

feedback on how we can – number one: retain the current housing need and get a picture of what the current housing need is – not only today, but well into the future.

So I am very excited and looking forward to seeing the recommendations that will be put forward by the housing action plan and rolling that out in June.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, your final question.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Members of the housing task force were appointed last December and I think the term runs out the end of June; we're assuming there will be a report come forward very, very quickly.

Question to the family and human services minister: Do you anticipate the work of that group to continue?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We will see what the results and the recommendations that come back in our housing action plan – which I might add is the first ever provincial housing action plan – which shows this government's commitment to Islanders and Islanders housing needs. This is historic. Not since the Campbell years has there been as much investment, not only to existing programs, but new investments to housing and the commitment to housing, not only today, but into the future.

I look forward to building on and engaging with the co-development team, the housing task force, and the housing action plan to help improve outcomes for housing on Prince Edward Island, now and into the future.

Thank you.

[End of Question Period]