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

FOR

FRIDAY, 8 JUNE 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.

My first question is to the minister of transportation. As we all know, the Hillsborough Bridge is the main transportation link between Charlottetown and eastern Prince Edward Island.

Construction work on Hillsborough Bridge

Minister: Can you explain what construction work is scheduled to take place on the Hillsborough Bridge this year?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are doing some reinforcement of different areas of the bridge so that we can start to install the sewer pipe that has to go across underneath the bridge. That work is continuing this year.

The work around the active transportation committee that has been put together has met, and will be continuing work for plans for an active transportation corridor.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Over 30,000 vehicles use the Hillsborough Bridge on a daily basis travelling between Charlottetown, Stratford and beyond.

Priority of bridge on infrastructure list

Question to the minister: Where does the Hillsborough Bridge stand on your government's infrastructure priority list?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That is a project that's going to be an \$8 million project, which has been submitted to Ottawa. We are working putting that project together in different phases. It's already on our priority list.

We have started the work on the bridge. We actually started last year on that. That work will continue in phases.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The Hillsborough Bridge is a key link to expanding active transportation networks between Stratford and Charlottetown.

Timeline for completion and safety of bridge

To the minister: What's the timeline to see the work completed to make the Hillsborough Bridge a safer place to cyclists and pedestrians?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, it is an important link between the two communities, between Stratford and Charlottetown.

We have put together an active transportation committee, which involves both of those communities, with the department, with Cycling PEI.

We put out an RFP so we can start a planning process. That RFP has just come back so we will be starting that. We'll continue that work.

There is the other work that has to be done on the bridge itself; the planning; and the pipe has to go across this year.

We don't expect the active transportation corridor to finish until the work on the bridge is finished.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Again to the transportation minister: The Hillsborough Bridge will be a vital part of the project to pipe the sewage waste from Stratford to Charlottetown for treatment, a great example of regional cooperation to improve our environment.

Timeline re: pipe for sewage waste

Minister: What is the timeline for this work to begin and to be completed?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are continuing with that work, as I noted. That plan is going to be put together so that we can do it right when we do, do it. It involves both the cities, the City of Charlottetown, Stratford, the other communities, our department. The work will continue over the next several years. Out in 2023, we expect that to be finished.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Again, to the transportation minister: There have been calls for safety barriers to be installed on the Hillsborough Bridge; most recently, in the province's own suicide prevention strategy, something that I and our caucus fully supports.

Safety barriers on Hillsborough Bridge

Question to the minister: When will work begin on this important call for safety barriers to be placed on the Hillsborough Bridge?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's certainly always ways that we can make investments into suicide prevention on Prince Edward Island.

One of which, there are a number of which have been released under the mental health strategy and suicide prevention strategy.

Making investments in that at the frontline is certainly the priority that should be placed upon wherever there is a challenge with someone who has reached that point in their life. We need to do everything we can do be proactive so that that is not an option at the very end.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The suicide prevention strategy was just released a couple of weeks ago.

My question again is to the minister of transportation: Is this a priority? Will Islanders, once and for all, see safety barriers placed on the Hillsborough Bridge?

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

Ms. Biggar: A priority for this government is to put together a comprehensive plan that will address mental health in this province, as the strategy has indicated. We will be doing everything we can work to do together with the department of health to address those challenges and any other challenges that need to be addressed. As we go forward, we will certainly take those under review.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, recently local media reported that this government was considering an application for nude entertainment for a bar in West Prince.

Application process re: nude entertainment

Question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Minister, what measures were taken during this application review process?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) under the *Liquor Control Act*.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: I don't need any more controversy.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, there was an application put forward to the PEI LCC. The regulations surrounding that called for a – PEI LCC staff went out and actually went door-to-door. I think the number was around 160 to 170 homes in the area that the application was put forward to.

After a period of time, I believe the respondent that wanted to do this decided against it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for that answer. That is, indeed, exactly what the liquor commission director told media: that when a licensed established requests to hold an event involving exotic or nude entertainment in an area where there is no municipal council, it is commission policy to poll area residents.

In Bill No. 101, one change to the MGA legislated that IRAC hold a plebiscite if the minister deemed there was significant public interest in a proposal. It was voted down by every single government member with almost no debate.

Amalgamation versus nude entertainment

Question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Why does this government take more time and effort to

consult residents about nude entertainment than amalgamation?

Mr. Myers: Oh, good question.

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

Mr. R. Brown: I'm going to be good –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: – thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the member for his question.

We are in front of IRAC now. We have several applications for amalgamation. Things are going pretty good over there from what I understand.

A mediator has been appointed for the Three Rivers area and they are working themselves through the process.

We have to remember, rural PEI is doing great. Anything the province can do –

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: – or the government can do to make them work greater, it will benefit all of Prince Edward Island. We're encouraging areas to continue to cooperate with each other and work with each other because it makes PEI a greater place.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance and the director with the liquor commission told media that inspectors were sent door-to-door in Bloomfield to poll residents.

In fact, dozens of residents, in fact, I believe the number was almost 200 residents were consulted by government employees about this new entertainment event; yet, this government refuses to recognize the results of the plebiscite that was held regarding the Three Rivers amalgamation and annexation.

Democratic rights of residents

Question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Minister, why are people's democratic rights important for nude entertainment, but not important for amalgamation and annexation?

An Hon. Member: Good question.

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

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

I thank the member for the question. Everybody is being listened to when amalgamation occurs. There have been meetings in the Three Rivers areas and everybody got together for these meetings. We have the West River group now formed and they're going out meeting with their community members.

Community spirit comes from the people that live in the community. Community growth comes from the people that live in the community. If there's a linkage between getting people to cooperate and work with each other and listen to each other, it makes for a better PEI and it makes for a place where we can live, work, and raise a family here. I think we have one of the greatest provinces in Canada and in the world where that can happen.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, in fact, the liquor commission director stated that a community poll would have to be completed for each subsequent application for nude entertainment. These are ongoing polls. Bill No. 111 legislated that a petition be signed by at least 30% of any areas being annexed before a proposal could move forward. This government squashed Bill No. 111 just like it continues to squash the voice of Islanders.

Community polls in unincorporated areas

Question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Can you explain why community polls in unincorporated areas are conducted by this government for nude entertainment, but not for amalgamation?

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

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

I understand the member from Georgetown conducted a voting for the unincorporated areas and I thank him for that. Those voices will be heard at IRAC and I understand that IRAC is working extremely hard right now in order to see what the residents of the Three Rivers areas really want to do.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: I was going to say 'honour the vote', but I was worried.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 111 attempted to introduce standard tools of democracy to give Islanders a better voice in any community restructuring proposals: petitions, mandatory public hearings, plebiscites, and debate on proposals on the floor of this Legislature. This Liberal government voted it down as a fully whipped group. Instead of democracy, Islanders who live in unincorporated areas are having amalgamation forced down their throats by this government. This is a government that appears to care more about public opinion regarding sanctioned nude entertainment –

An Hon. Member: Forty seconds.

Mr. Trivers: – in unincorporated areas than it does in actually honouring the vote.

Mr. Speaker, will the communities minister tell all Islanders why this is the case?

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

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

I thank the member for the question. Forced amalgamation? He couldn't be further from the truth. There's a democratic process going on and I'm folding right now for the Three Rivers area. It will go on for any other municipality. This is the most open process a community group can have. He pretends to forget there's other people on the other side

of this issue that wants to make their community better. They think they can make their community better by amalgamation and they should be listened to also.

So to say there's a forced amalgamation going on couldn't be further from the truth. We have a process that's going on at IRAC right now – open and transparent and open to every individual. Every individual can go to IRAC as they have. We have an open system and the people will decide.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Islanders have been awaiting regulations pertaining to the cannabis act dealing with many matters, yet on May 15th, rather than completing these regulations, this government brought in new regulations around nude entertainment.

Priorities of cannabis act and regulations versus nude entertainment

Will the Minister of Finance tell us why this is his government's priority?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, the exotic entertainment has been a part of the province for a number of years. It has taken place and I know the opposition is trying to swing it as if it's something new, but it's happened with many governments over the course of the years. There is legislation around exotic entertainment in relevance to what the opposition is saying: calling nude and strippers and using language like that, but there is a process in place.

I think allowing us to go into the communities and actually ask the communities by going door-to-door to get the exact results – even, we went back a second time in that area to ensure that we did get every house and we knew exactly what the feeling was in the neighborhood so we could make a defined decision.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The yet completed cannabis regulations include important standards around consumption and storage for a drug that's supposed to be legalized on July 1st. Yet on May 15th, rather than completing these regulations, this government changed their exotic entertainment regulations to define the terms 'nude' and 'physical contact'.

Will the Minister of Finance explain to us why this is government's priority?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think we're actually listening to the people of Prince Edward Island.

As far as the cannabis file goes, we seen that there was almost four dozen amendments made by the Senate. I listened to Sean Casey this morning on the radio and Diane Griffin, the senator, and it was very interesting to hear where they stood on this whole issue of cannabis.

As a member, I took a look at what Senator Pratte said – an independent senator that was leading some of the charge on this. He said: Do we take a deep breath, close our eyes and stick with a demonstrably failed, hypocritical, unhealthy, prohibitionist approach of the past or do we move forward with our eyes wide open? I think we're seeing right now how everything is changing around the world. We're seeing it in elections, we're seeing it in what people are demanding from governments and I think we're being proactive in what we're trying to do.

Thank you.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well let's talk about another act – the *Water Act*. Islanders are waiting for the regulations

on the *Water Act*, but on May 15th, rather than completing these regulations, this government changed their nude entertainment regulations to allow entertainers to expose themselves while covered with paint or another fabric substance.

Priorities of *Water Act* and regulations versus nude entertainment

Minister of Finance: Why is this government – why is that their priority?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think this side of the House is socially responsible to the people of PEI and that's at the heart of this matter. That's exactly what we, as a government, have done and we're very conscious of that issue. We're continuing to review the *Liquor Control Act* and we have some regulation and policy changes ready to go any day. We'll continue to do that and update it and as I said, there's changes around the world and the outlook on certain issues across the country and around the world are very different than they were even five years ago, especially with social media and what's transpired there. We'll continue to be progressive as a government and make our changes as we move forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're not saying that there don't need to be changes to the regulations around nude entertainment, but what we're saying is: this government's priorities – we're talking about the *Water Act*. What about the loophole-filled lobbyist act? Islanders are waiting for those regulations. But rather, on May 15th, rather than completing these regulations, this government changed their nude entertainment regulations, lowering the separation zone between an entertainer on stage and the audience from two meters down to one meter.

Priorities of lobbyist act versus nude entertainment

Minister: Why are these your priorities?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Obviously, anybody listening to this debate in the House today would certainly believe that they do not want us to change the approval of exotic entertainment regulations. I'm not sure what the process of that thought is transpiring over on the other side of the House, but I can tell you that we got a government over here that is –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Okay, wow, wow. Order!

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) province, do you think that that's the most important thing?

Speaker: Order!

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just add one comment. This side of the House is socially responsible to the PEI Islanders and we'll continue to do that.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What about the PTSD legislation? We're waiting for regulations on that; the PTSD legislation, the *Water Act*, the lobbyist act – all much more of a priority than nude entertainment.

Priorities of government

For this government: Why is nude entertainment and the regulations around that your priority?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I think some of the innuendo coming from across the floor is very interesting. I think we've likely put through some of the most important bills ever seen in Prince Edward Island right here in the House sitting in this Legislature.

The debates have been ongoing. We're continuing to likely make history with one of the most genuine debates of this Legislature in regards to the referendum. We continue to compromise with the opposition and the third party. We continue to build relationships with community groups. We've had the best budget we've likely had in a long, long time with investments in not-for-profits, investments in mental health, investments in education and investments in all kinds – look at the announcement yesterday for social assistance. It's unheard of in most provinces.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Murphy: And they want to talk about nude dancers.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Browsing in Hansard, I found the following quote in reference to fixed-date elections: The Premier can sit in his office and say; I will call an election on such and such a date. I will tell no one about the election on such and such a day. I will start campaigning right away.

Is that a fair model for our country? Is that the kind of model that our citizens want where a person can sit in a private office and determine the date of the election and then start campaigning at any time before that? That's not a fair model.

Premier ability to call election

A question for the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Can you tell me who said that? Was it A, the former premier Robert Ghiz? B, the current Premier? C, the current Leader of the Third Party, or D, none of the above?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) trivia (Indistinct)

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

Mr. R. Brown: I think I may have said that, Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, minister, you did that say in the Legislature on May 4th, 2006.

Do you still stand by those words?

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

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

I'm proud to say that when we got elected in 2007, we came in with a fixed-election act in here in Prince Edward Island and the act has certain provisions in it that allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council or the governor to call an election when one is needed.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During debate on the fixed-date election legislation in 2008, Mike Currie asked: Minister, what would cause the Assembly to dissolve? And you responded on behalf of the minister: A vote of no confidence and we're done.

You did not offer any other scenario for an unscheduled election.

Non-confidence vote re: call of an election

Again, to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Do you still believe that a non-confidence vote is the only legitimate reason to call a snap election?

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

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

This was monumental legislation that was passed in 2007 and it allows for an opportunity to set a date for an election, but it also allows flexibility when needed. If there's a crisis happening or there is a question of confidence in the government, quite obviously we have to go to the polls.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is for the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

As many of us know, the Nova Scotia company Northern Pulp has announced their controversial proposal for a new effluent treatment facility in Pictou County. The plan is for the effluent to be discharged into the Northumberland Strait, which could have detrimental effects on our fisheries and marine life in general. Our fishermen are terrified for what could happen. Their livelihoods are at stake.

Safety of fishers re: effluent treatment plant

Minister, what has your department done to ensure the safety of our fishers during discussions for the new effluent facility?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, as a minister of fisheries in the Province of Prince Edward Island, I'm very concerned and want to make sure that we're supporting our marine habitats, especially marine habitats that are shared by other jurisdictions. From our perspective as a government, we have wrote letters; the Premier has wrote letters to the premier of Nova Scotia as well as I've had conversations with the minister of fisheries in Nova Scotia, to make sure that all the mitigating factors are put in place to protect these marine environments and that minimal impact will be had on the shared fishing grounds that we use.

Premier MacLauchlan: (Indistinct)

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

Pressure on feds and NS government re: effluent

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If this new effluent treatment facility goes forward, it would discharge roughly 70 million litres of hot water into the Strait. I know we put pressure on the Nova Scotia government to ensure all valuables are considered, but minister, what are you doing to put pressure on the federal government and the Nova Scotia government so they will have evidence-based and in-depth environmental review of the effluent and their effects on our marine life?

Mr. Myers: Good question. You're doing nothing. That's (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, as I'd mentioned earlier, the Premier did write a letter. I've had conversations with the minister of fisheries in Nova Scotia, but we also have been in contact with the federal government, the federal minister of environment, and we've made a request – the Premier has made a request that we see a full environmental review federally done instead of just a class one review done by the government or Nova Scotia.

I think the reality is that these are shared waters, and I think because they're shared waters with cross jurisdictions there could be impacts had that are somewhat unknown, and I want to make sure that a federal review would be the most appropriate response.

I have made a request to meet with the minister of fisheries whenever the Legislature closes here, and we are working on trying to get a mutually-agreed upon date at that time, Mr. Speaker.

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

Data on effluent effects on fisheries

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, does your department have the data on the affects of the treatment facility? In other words, what has happened before and do you have any data projected going forward, that when that effluent starts to hit the Strait, what effects it's going to have on our fisheries?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, as it is a Nova Scotia project at this point in time, I do not have specific scientific data pertaining to the issues that will be pertaining to this, other than – the Northern Pulp had been here to the Legislature. They'd made a presentation to the environmental and fisheries committee.

They have not even actually made their request to the review. That's going to be done; I'm told, sometime in July. But, I can assure you that we will be monitoring the situation quite closely. We'll be making sure that we get all the impacts of the review, that whenever it's completed I'm hopeful that it will be a federal environmental assessment and once again, we'll also further follow up on that with conversations with minister Colwell in Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question this morning is to the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Our government has made significant investments in mental health initiatives for Islanders. I understand the department of education is beginning to implement mental health literacy training for educators, teachers, and staff so they can better assist their students in terms of mental health issues.

Mental health literacy training

Minister, how many teachers and staff will be receiving this special training?

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

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

This is a great program that we're very pleased to have had the cooperation, in particular of Dr. Stan Kutcher, on. There were 30 master trainers already trained either this winter or last fall. They included administrators, school counsellors, health and phys-ed teachers, and student well-being team members.

Dr. Stan Kutcher was over and did a day down in Summerside. Actually, I think it was two-and-a-half days interspersed around a snow storm, and we are very pleased to have him and his participation in this project.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, is there a targeted list of teachers who will receive the literacy training at each school?

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

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

It is interesting to note that those that have taken the training so far have said that it's the best PD that they have ever had or a good part of them have. We expect to train 100 intermediate health teachers this fall. These teachers deliver many of the components of the health curriculum that cover mental health.

There is a committee of intermediate principals, councillors, and health teachers who are working on a rollout of the training implementation and the mental health curriculum, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When you evaluate the first session of this literacy training, will your department be implementing the training for the rest of the teachers and staff across the Island?

An Hon. Member: Good idea.

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

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

I'm pleased to say that this will be determined by the committee. Teachers will get training in two ways.

Some will be trained through the curriculum process; for example, the health teachers. Others will receive the training as part of their school goals process. Those goals are set by the school through the school administrators.

All schools have well-being goals. Many intermediate and high schools have mental health literacy as their well-being goal. Many of these staff have already been taking the initiative, which is provided online through Dr. Stan Kutcher and a connection, I think, it's with UBC.

In fact, by the end of June, one whole school staff will have completed the online mental health literacy training, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In my opening statement, I talked about the post-partum mental health supports that this government has provided over the past year.

Their program states that this happens – the mother is reached out to just days after the baby is born. Two months after the baby is born, every mother will be screened using a perinatal, postnatal depression scale. From there, referrals will be sent to a newly appointed Women's Wellness Program social worker for clinical care or referrals to community mental health if necessary.

Support for sufferers of miscarriages

As I said, this is fantastic. I was wondering if the health minister could tell us if this type of program would also be available to those who suffer miscarriages?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, the interview that was held this morning on CBC radio, which, I, as well listened to was a very powerful message brought forward.

Obviously, when young mothers are dealing with post partum and I know from experience within my own family. When my first child was born, my wife struggled with that. It's something that – it's difficult for those individuals to reach out for that help to be able to provide this through a program and to be able to educate young mothers during the early stages of their pregnancy.

As was mentioned this morning by the young lady interviewed, after the baby is born it's a very overwhelming time. If you can have that education piece prior to, it is so beneficial.

Our Women's Wellness Program is being developed, or being worked on, will have parts to play whether – on all of those things available to all Island women that needs the services, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, all those are very positive.

I'm wondering, minister, if the same type of health supports and screening could be there for mothers and families that have miscarriages. We all know the struggle that some people will have with that. It doesn't even – sometimes it's not even with a first miscarriage, sometimes it's with a second miscarriage that post-partum depression, as well.

Could the minister look at providing the same type of service for those, who have a miscarriage?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

If that is a need, absolutely, we would be more than willing to look into those situations.

I said, off the floor of the Legislature many times, mental health and mental health treatment; it's about seeing the right professional at the right time in the right place.

In situations of miscarriages, that does have an effect, a mental health effect; whether it's to be seen by a social service worker or psychiatrist or a psychologist or some other professional. I certainly, would be more than willing to look at that and to develop something if it's a needed measure, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's great to hear, minister, because right now, the screening does happen after the birth of a child. Perhaps, after the screening – could be provided after a miscarriage, as well because it is a tough time.

Minister, can you commit to doing that so that we don't go through another year of those who have had miscarriage – and that they would be able to access the same type of health services?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Women's Wellness Program that is in place today provides that person-centred care for Island women, whether they need assistance, whether it's the reproductive side or sexual health needs side, but if that's not meeting the needs of any Island women that have had miscarriage experience, this to

date, and there is some other service that is not being afforded to them, we would be more than willing to talk to those individuals and work with them to develop who would be the right kind of health care professional that they would need to see and what health outcomes could be made better, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister mentioned about the Senate passing a bill last night on the legalization of cannabis.

Public health education on cannabis

Could the minister of health give us an update on the timelines for the public health education around cannabis here on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The public health office, under the department of health is working diligently on that educational piece. We want to ensure that Islanders, knowing full well that we are in this cannabis trail, that we are well educated on the use of marijuana; on effects of marijuana.

That work is ongoing. I anticipate the RFP has gone out and that we'll be working on that in the very near future. There's still some time before it sounds like, the Senate, although they passed some things last night, it has to go back to the House of Commons. There's some other work that needs to be done in Ottawa.

We, at the department, are working very diligently on getting that education piece out as soon as we possibly can, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A recent 10-year study on youth cannabis was completed by researchers at StFX and the University of Victoria.

The study found that young people identified with high-risk patterns of cannabis usage were more likely to have more poor health education and health outcomes, along with increased mental health and behavioural issues.

Protecting vulnerable populations

Question for the health minister: How is our mental health system equipped for cannabis legalization to protect our vulnerable populations?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In my discussions with those that work in the mental health field here on Prince Edward Island are concerned about what effects cannabis may have. We are getting on the ready for those types of things by talking with other jurisdictions as to how they're preparing; what would we need to do here locally.

The education piece will be a very big part of how things will roll out. We do know that we will have to do more work in regards to mental health issues. There is an attention, and that is from all across the country concerns about that.

We will work together to see what others are doing and what we can do here to make those differences in the lives of those suffering from mental illness in any way, shape or form, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last fall, the health committee had a briefing on mental health services. The chief mental health officer, at that time, expressed concern, as many people across the country, to our committee around the effect cannabis use has on the frontal lobe development in our young adults.

Drafting public health education campaigns

Another question to the health minister.

Minister, can you make sure that our mental health professionals have a seat at the table when we're crafting these public health education campaigns?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our harm and educational awareness and research, this is a long-term investment. This will continue on into the future.

Dr. Keizer, who leads our mental health team and research team over there, is working on this; is aware of situations, and are working with her team of psychiatrists and those in the mental health field to develop a program, moving forward.

The work will not just roll out something and that will be the end of it. We will continuously be working on the education piece moving forward. We have committed dollars so that that will be year-over-year dollars so that this is the best program it can be to inform and educate; not only our youth, but older Islanders as well, because this will be available to all and we want to ensure that we are prepared to handle anything that comes from it.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, your final question.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd encourage the minister to use his school mental health teams as well to be involved with this education.

Someone suggested to me another good idea: There are many of us with children that are entering into a – getting close to a junior high school age as well and that's an important time for an education component. A lot of parents like myself are wondering how to introduce the topic – how to talk about it with their children.

Home and school education on cannabis

Minister: Could you make sure that each of our home and school associations across the province have the education material and the learning opportunities to understand and to talk to our kids about this new introduction of cannabis into Canada?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This information will be available for all Islanders and I do anticipate that home and school associations will be getting up to speed on that. Our school programs will be part of where things are presented to. There's websites, there's a federal government website right now that has a lot of the information on it, and we'll be putting everything that we have online. So there'll be lots of access to all the information moving forward, but, yes, a concerted effort will be on our youth, will be in our education system, and that's where we're going to make the early intervention. Although cannabis is only legally available to those over 19, it is important that we educate our children young on safe usage of it when they're over the age of 19, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]