



Session:	3/65
Date:	12 June 2018
No:	60

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

TUESDAY, 12 JUNE 2018

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Outsourcing developments to *Lobbyists Registration Act*

My first question is to the Premier: Premier, why is your government outsourcing development of the regulations for the *Lobbyists Registration Act*?

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

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

I'm not sure where the hon. member got that information from, but we're not, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Again, to the Premier: Government is now advertising an advanced contract award notice for implementing a new lobbyist registry. It's like a tender, but a supplier is already picked, and you're checking to see if anyone else meets the job requirements.

Again to the Premier: Why would you go this way instead of simply having a public tender?

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

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

To be very clear about what's going on here, it's in relation to the actual database that would be put in place. As we've debated here in the House, we have a new corporate registry that's – we'll hopefully have

activated, I guess, by the early fall of this year.

The company that is referenced in the document that the hon. member is speaking about is Davis Pier. That's the same company. Due to the time constraints and their knowledge of the backend systems that would be required to implement this database, the thought was that they have already met many of the requirements. This is a process that was recommended by treasury to move this process along.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Hiring of consultants for government regulations

Again, to the Premier: Another contract requirement was for providing drafting assistance for regulations. Why would you need to hire consultants to write government regulations instead of using government lawyers?

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

Mr. J. Brown: Mr. Speaker, to be clear, again, this particular piece is in relation to the software implementation that dovetails with the regulations. There is a piece where there has to be compliance between the two for obvious reasons. Regardless of who has the pen, the software developer that is preparing the database obviously would have to be integrally involved in the preparation of those regulations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

In the information that's available online, another contract requirement is for stakeholder engagement and communications.

Contract for stakeholder engagement and communications

Again, to the Premier: Why would you need to contract those functions out when you already have a whole division for communications and public engagements in executive office?

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

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

Again, there's a requirement that the software that is required to support or operate this database be prepared. This is the same process that we undertook with the business corporations database and Davis Pier was involved extensively with that process. They're a very professional outfit that were involved in a tender process for that.

I'll be very clear to say that this process is not designating Davis Pier as the successful applicant. It's indicating that they have indicated a willingness to do it at a certain price and to canvass the possibility that there might be others in that very confined space, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) database.

Leader of the Opposition: Question again, to the Premier: The contract note says that the work would start on July 1st, take at least nine months and cost at least \$85,000.

The *Lobbyists Registration Act* received Royal Assent almost six months ago, and yet has to be proclaimed.

Reason for delay in lobbyist registry

Question to the Premier: What is the reason for the delay in having the lobbyist registry up and running?

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

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

What's been going on since the *Lobbyists Registration Act* passed through this Assembly is exactly as the hon. member had indicated, and is the preparation of draft regulations?

What then happens is that the successful applicant will take those draft regulations; determine what can be done with software to activate them. Once we get that entire package together, the act will be turned on, if you will. It will be proclaimed, and will be put in place.

This is exactly part of the reason why Davis Pier has been named in this particular way because they're there. We know that they've worked well through the corporation's database. We know that they're available and can do this work in a timely fashion.

Thank you.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) on PEI (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Provinces covering ostomy supplies

Could the minister of health tell us which provinces and territories provide some or full support to cover ostomy supplies?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I don't have that information at my fingertips, but I'd be happy to go back and collect that information and bring it back to the hon. member.

What I did do, recently, was have a wonderful meeting of Islanders affected with ostomy-supply needs. It was a very educational meeting for me where we had great discussion on how this has become –

affecting their lives on a daily basis and significant burden for them.

I suggested to them that, as soon as the Legislature closed, I would be very pleased to have them come back into the office to talk about ways and means that we could work together so that their needs be met.

It's not a large number of Islanders, but it is a number of Islanders that live with this on a daily basis.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think the minister hit the nail on the head, there. It's not a large number of Islanders. I'd be awfully surprised if that group didn't tell the minister that we are the only province that doesn't provide any support.

Access of coverage for ostomy supplies

Will the health minister tell us when Islanders who have had ostomy surgery be able to access coverage for these medical supplies?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In light of those wonderful conversations, I am very interested in sitting down again to further those discussions. Obviously, this is something that's very important to me, as minister. It's very important to our department that we have these conversations and that we come up with solutions so that their needs are met.

As I said it's not a large number of Islanders, but it would be such an uplifting effect for them to be able to supply the needs that they have. We'll work diligently towards that, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Diverticulitis, colon cancer, Crohn's disease, colitis, many others, we don't need any

more meetings. We already know what's going on out there.

Why won't the province provide any coverage for medical supplies needed by all of these patients?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly there's a broad range of need for the ostomy supplies. Obviously it's a conversation that needed to happen and we're moving forward and we're looking for opportunities and solutions here.

As minister of health, meeting Islanders' health needs from all ends of the spectrum is very important to me. It's very important to our department and we'll continue to look at that and work at ways that we can get together. I'm looking very optimistically to getting that meeting – hopefully in the next week or so after the House closes. I'm assuming that could be in that time frame so that we can have that very valuable conversation once again.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Back in March, the Montague Rotary club came to our health committee to talk about the good work they do to try and plug the gaps in their social safety net. One of the biggest issues they flagged was ostomy care. They told us, and I'll quote: Your ostomy supplies are not covered by the Catastrophic Drug Program. They can run \$400-\$500 a month. That individual then tries to make that stretch; they have an infection or sepsis; then they're in hospital or an assisted-living facility. It's a short-term savings for a long-term expense and we've robbed that person of their quality of life.

Question to the health minister: How is the current policy of not providing any support to ostomy patients for medical supplies enhancing their dignity or quality of life?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's exactly why I think it's important that we sit down, talk about their needs, look at ways they can be met, and provide it for them. This is a group that lead their daily lives in a way that none of the rest of us can imagine and I think we should be supportive of that. I want to work with this group and I'm looking forward to those meetings so we get some solution to their needs.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This department's called health and wellness. We know health is trying to treat the sick; wellness is trying to prevent illness down the road. I know the Member from Rustico-Emerald speaks of this at length in the Legislature about investing early.

Cost of coverage versus cost of follow-up treatment

Minister: Has your department looked at the cost of coverage versus the cost of follow-up treatment for ostomy patients whose health worsens due to a lack of proper access to medical supplies?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That is exactly the type of work that's been going on since our last meeting. We are looking at data and numbers that can supply the information that we need to go out and do the fight so that their needs are being met.

Obviously, when you look at health costs on Prince Edward Island – over 700 million – there are a lot of Islanders that need a lot of their health needs met and we're doing our utmost best to meet those in every case. Whether it's in cancer treatments; whether it's in other treatments, we work together as a department at the department and with Health PEI to come forward with solutions. It's all about making that significant

difference in the lives of Islanders on a daily basis and we do that very well and we do it very proudly.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I understand we've had another referral to the Montague Rotary club (Indistinct) week and you heard right, Mr. Speaker, I said a referral to the Rotary club because someone can't afford their ostomy supplies. It shouldn't have to go to the Rotary club. They should be doing many other things than having to provide financial assistance for something like this. All the extra work they could do if they weren't covering what should be a basic medical expense.

Access of coverage for ostomy supplies (further)

Minister: You talk about going back to meet with them again. We don't need to meet with these people again; we already know the story. Have you partnered with big corporations; have you partnered with drug companies? What are we doing to get these supplies covered?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, what the member speaks of – service clubs that are asked time-after-time, day-after-day to step up and help Islanders and as a member of one of the largest service clubs on Prince Edward Island, we, as groups, are proud to do that. Families have a lot of needs when it comes to various health care needs and service clubs are often asked to assist in that and they're happy to do it. The one that I'm a member of, we're happy to do it as well.

These situations exist on PEI; it's important we have those discussions; it's important that we look at solutions; and yes, their needs are being researched at the moment. Costing is being done, what type of supplies that are needed and can any of the pharmaceutical companies be assistance to

that? These are all things that are ongoing and I am very confident that in the very near future, we will be able to stand, either on the floor of this House to make an announcement, or in one of the local medias to say that we've come to a good solution and that everything will be worked out for the needs of these folks.

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

Mr. Myers: Data from Stats Can shows that the national male suicide rate is three times the rate of women.

Strategy to identify male suicide rate

Question to the minister of health: Will the minister tell us what strategy he is using to identify the reasons and what plan he has to combat it?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly when we talk about suicides here on Prince Edward Island, it is a situation that does exist. We can't put our heads in the sand on this. We do have to step up; we do have to do some work. When it comes to mental health needs on Prince Edward Island, we are working very diligently as a department. We are investing up to \$3 million this year. We invested 3.7 last year. We are hiring new psychiatrists; we are looking for psychologists; we are looking for social workers; we're trying to ensure that every Islanders need is being met by seeing the appropriate medical professional, at the appropriate place, at the appropriate time.

Obviously there are many mental health issues on Prince Edward Island and we're doing our best to kind of take those situations in hand and develop new programs for each one.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So clearly the minister of health does not understand male suicide because only 35%

of males seek help the year they commit suicide. Stats Can shows that the pattern of male suicide is a long-term pattern in this country. The highest rates were found in those aged 40 to 59.

Question to the minister: Why has government long ignored these facts on male mental health and suicides?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a department, we look at statistics – our Island statistics; we look at national statistics; we look at international statistics and try to learn from those and develop programs that make a real difference in the lives of Islanders that are suffering with this terrible mental illness disease.

There wouldn't be a door that you wouldn't knock on on Prince Edward Island anywhere that hasn't seen the effects of mental illness. We are doing our utmost best to develop programs to develop medical situations for these folks that are dealing with those. As I said, our youth programs – both the INSIGHT and the Strength Program are making a significant difference in the lives of young individuals – and young males in a lot of cases. So we are working on that; we are trying to get a hold of that and make some big difference in lives of Islanders.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, clearly the minister does not understand male mental health and male suicide because these people don't come forward, they don't talk to anybody, they don't even talk to their friends about their problems – 35% of the men have gone to seek help in the year they've tried to commit suicide. That, on top of the 45 day average wait period to see a mental health practitioner under your system, is obviously adding to it.

At the 35% of men who seek help in the year they commit suicide is comparable to 58% of women who seek at the same time. So, while delays in accessing the services

needs to be addressed, also, support for men and encouragement for men to come forward with their issues, also has to be addressed.

Support for males considering suicide

Question to the minister: What are you doing to help men come forward?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With our establishment for our mental health walk in clinics, we've been seeing significant numbers coming through the doors there. Obviously, developing stronger partnerships with private sector groups such as Canadian mental health, such as family services, whose doors are always open – there are no waits. The folks can come in and be assisted.

These are areas where we are identifying needs of Islanders; these are areas where we're making improvements; and these are areas that we'll continue to enhance and make investments in. Strategic investments are where we're going to make the most strides and we'll continue to do that proudly.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So the government has to start recognizing that men are a very high-risk group for suicide and they need to start tailoring a message for men and creating specific programming for men. There are also specific sub-groups of males that are more vulnerable to suicide. They include: gay and transgender men, Indigenous men, those that are vulnerable to PTSD, such as first responders, men in lower socioeconomic class are also more likely, men who suffer from job loss are also more likely, men who go through divorce are also way more likely to commit suicide.

Minister, there is hope. I believe a men's action secretariat would promote and support projects and programs and services that address the area specifically around men's mental health. I think that it's a

crucial step that we could take here in Prince Edward Island.

Men's action secretariat

What's your view on a men's action secretariat?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

On Prince Edward Island, our population has become more diverse over the last number of years. We see that numbers increasing – we definitely want to work in areas where mental health needs of Islanders, no matter what group they belong to, whether they are male or female or young or old. We want to ensure that our programs are meeting their needs to the best possible way that it can be.

We'll continue to invest. We will continue to invest strategically where we can, but we've come a long way, in my opinion, in the last eight months or so, nine months, and we will continue to grow into the future. Any means that provides service to any one sector group, certainly I would be interested in taking a look at that, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A men's action secretariat would take action through public policy and resources to address serious issues that are being overlooked for men.

There are many examples worldwide of progressive approaches that are being taken by other governments to support men. Austria has for years had a department of men's policy with their social affairs ministry. Ireland and Australia have both created a multi-year national men's health policy and here in Canada, British Columbia has a men's health initiative organization.

Addressing men's mental health issues

A question to the minister: Why has your government continued to ignore, since 2012

when Stats Canada has released this information about the lopsided men's suicide compared to females, why have you continued to ignore it and not taken action such as these other jurisdictions have to help address men's mental health issues?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

As I said earlier, making strategic investments year over year, we are seeing great strides with our mental health situations. Investments last year of over 3 million, this year of around 3 million, are making significant impacts on the lives of Islanders.

We will continue to work in that area. As I said, whether it's male, female, young or old, we do have a duty as a government and as a minister of health, and staff at both the department and Health PEI, to ensure that the needs of Islanders are being met when it comes to their mental health concerns. We have things like our women's wellness program that is in place, and if there's some other program that we should look at, we will sit down and do the work and do the research in that regard.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I recently heard from a family who is absolutely desperate. Their adult child has been an opioid addict for several years. Recently, their child attempted suicide. The young adult was brought to the QEH emergency room where they received excellent emergency care, but this will not help this young person with long-term, complex issues of mental health and addiction.

The recently announced suicide prevention strategy calls for the development of a circle-of-care approach which could be hugely beneficial for individuals like this, but it's unfortunately not yet available.

Timeline for circle-of-care approach

A question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: What is the timeline for implementing the circle-of-care approach outlined in the PEI Suicide Prevention Strategy?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

As the hon. member suggested, quite often when you're dealing with addictions you're dealing with mental health issues as well. We do our best in that regard to make those identifications when somebody presents themselves looking for help.

The suicide strategy has just been released. There are some action items that accompanied that document, and we are doing our work; staff right now are rolling up their sleeves in their offices trying to determine how they can move on those action items. We should see some things rolling forward very soon.

Hon. member, I don't have a specific time-date, but I can guarantee a lot of work is going on on the floor of our building there as we speak, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can fully appreciate that it takes time and the coordinated efforts of many departments and individuals to implement a strategy. But minister, Island families are suffering now.

Emergency strategy for suicide prevention

What should they do in the meantime? Do we have a single point of contact or an emergency strategy in the bridging space in between?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If anyone has a family doctor, that would be your first point of contact to kind of maneuver through the system. We do have a navigator in place that helps many of our, I'll say, our Island residents who are struggling with addictions.

This situation is increasing, I believe, it would be fair to say. Opioid use is gaining ground, and we've got to look at all aspects of that. We'll continue to do work in that area where we need to, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The suicide prevention strategy is a wonderful visionary document that when implemented will have a positive impact on the well being of Islanders. But, there are no timelines or clear action plans in that document.

Timeline of suicide prevention strategy

Question to the minister: What is the anticipated timeline to implement that overall suicide prevention strategy?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There was a significant amount of work that went into the suicide strategy. We partnered with the mental health who has a deep insight of needs of families across Prince Edward Island.

As part of a private entity that we worked with, the Canadian Mental Health Association would be very supportive if somebody presented there that needed assistance. They would be very helpful in maneuvering them through our health care system as well as other private entity groups that I mentioned earlier; family service and others that would be quite willing to answer the phone. There's a 1-877 number there as well that people can reach out to.

The big part is: reach out to somebody. Reach out to a family member, to a physician, to a social worker, to your friend

to try to get the first part of the health care system rolling for you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Sadly, suicide is a part of every community; communities everywhere. Just this last week, two international celebrities took their own lives, and here on Prince Edward Island George Curtis became the second Island veteran within a very short timeframe to die by suicide as a result of his PTSD.

The issue of suicide, of course, is deeply complicated, and every single instance is different and unique. But, governments carry a significant part of the responsibility for providing the resources to those for whom the despair has become so overwhelming that they consider ending their lives as a solution to their anguish.

Additional supports for minimizing suicide

A question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Beyond the suicide prevention strategy and the health services delivered by your department, what other assets in our community and in our society are critical when it comes to minimizing the number of suicides on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

As the hon. member alluded to, a couple of cases this week, this is not isolated. It's happening all over the world. People that you wouldn't expect are taking their lives due to suicide. So, nobody really knows the turmoil that anybody is going through on a daily basis.

What we do know is that there is help there if people reach out, to either their health professional, through our walk-in clinics, through entities such as the Canadian Mental Health Association who are always there to offer service.

This is something that every jurisdiction struggles with to try to get a handle and control of. Working together with everyone that's involved in this is how we'll get to the solution, and the important part is to begin the process and ask for help as early as you can.

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

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

Dr. Susan Hartley, the Green Party health and wellness critic, has described the suicide prevention strategy as a response strategy, better understood as a suicide ideation strategy, aimed at providing resources for people who are in crisis. Of course, that's critically important work, but we also need to create the type of society which will reduce the incidents of Islanders reaching that point of despair.

Elements of suicide prevention strategy

Minister, what elements of your current suicide prevention strategy are aimed at long-term, pro-active measures to, as the strategy states: make PEI safer from suicide?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are many that are being worked on. We've got to – eyes-wide-open approach here to look for best possible solution.

One that I think will make a significant difference is our mental health response team. Someone finds themselves in a situation where they don't see any light at the end of the tunnel. There will be a number that they will be able to call, and help will come to your door. I think that will make significant impacts.

I think data and research shows in other areas. It makes a big difference. Right now, we're at the design stage for that. I'm hopeful that we can move that out in a comfortable timeframe where Islanders will say that's a good manoeuvre; a good move when it comes to mental health needs on Prince Edward Island. We're looking forward to doing that, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

To be fair, the strategy does actually see the importance and recognizes in addressing in the disparities within the social determinants of health. However, there is nothing in that report to accomplish that.

Disparities in social determinants of health

Minister, what specific actions will you be considering to address those disparities in the social determinants of health?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think we'll probably be involving Islanders in that process. We'll be talking to other stakeholders. The strategy was written by Canadian mental health for the province. We'll work with them moving further.

Recommendations that comes out of there are very significant. We will do the work that's required there. We'll roll up our sleeves and get at those. I think working together with Islanders; with families of folks that are suffering with both addictions and mental health needs, that's where we're going to make the biggest strides and we'll continue to do that.

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

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

My question today is for the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Minister, on Friday, you had a joint announcement with the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, as well as the federal minister of agriculture and agri-Food.

This was held in Stratford, announcing a total of \$47.8 million to help the people of Prince Edward Island improve energy efficiency in their homes, businesses,

industries and farm operations across the province, as well as reduce carbon pollution in the forestry sector.

Reducing carbon pollution

Minister, can you explain to this House how this announcement be beneficial to all Islanders?

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

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

Yes, Friday was a great day for the environment. Over \$47 million was announced for programs to be delivered right across Prince Edward Island to reduce our carbon footprint.

That's a major reason that this fund was negotiated to reduce our carbon footprint. Along with that fund, we also have the electrical rebate program that is going to assist Islanders to move away from fossil fuels to renewable energies; two great programs; two great funds to work on reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.

I can say that with these funds we will be able to meet our targets by 2030. We will also be working with the agricultural community also, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford, first supplementary.

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

Myself, having a farm and knowing – everyone here knowing the value of agriculture to the province, I was really pleased to see that there were dollars in here for the agriculture community.

Minister: How will this affect PEI farmers and what will the cost be for them?

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

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

Yes, there was money in there for the agriculture community because we want to work with the agriculture community in

order to assist them in lowering their GHGs, too.

The agriculture community contributes 25% of greenhouse gas emissions and we want to work with them. With discussions with the Federation of Agriculture and farmers, I know that we can.

Over the last 10 years, our government has done a tremendous partnership with Island farmers on Prince Edward Island. We have the ALUS Program that has taken land out of production, put it into environmental. We have the buffer zones. We have the watershed areas.

I can honestly say that the agriculture community is committed to the environment because they know how important the environment is to their production.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

On the other announcement, I noticed, listening to it, there were dollars for windows, doors, heat pumps, those sorts of thing and double dollars for those who are of lower income.

My question to the minister is: As the retail price for these is at a level point right now, we add a grant to that, how do we ensure that the retail price does not start to grow in that and the benefit from these grants is somewhat lost?

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The member brings up a good point because the objective here is to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. We have committed to 30% reduction of 2005 levels by 2030.

I think that we will be monitoring prices of certain items that will be used to help assist

Islanders to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. I think if we do see a trend there, we'll be contacting the sellers of these products just to inform them that, you know, we all have to work together here to make the environment. We shouldn't be making a big profit of saving the environment because it's here for all of us.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Dumville: Mr. Speaker, on April 24th, 2018, I received written notice from the chair of the special committee on committees that met in camera on April 19th, 2018, declining my request to be named as a permanent member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. It also stated that all standing committees of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island will remain the same.

When I became an independent member, according to the rules, I was automatically removed from all legislative committees. This committee decision freezes my ability to fully participate on any committee.

Barring independent member from legislative committees

Question to the Premier: Premier, were the Liberal members of this committee instructed to bar me from having voting rights on all legislative committees?

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) he can go to everything except –

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question.

Very simply, no, there were no discussions –

Mr. LaVie: Oh (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – there were no instructions. I'm sure that the committee had its own deliberations and it's reflected in the letters –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – spoken to by the hon. member.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: Scary to think they thought for themselves (Indistinct)

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

Mr. Dumville: Question to the Premier: In particular, was the ban on my voting rights on the Public Accounts committee to prevent me from voting on motions highlighting unreasonable bad government decisions such as the Mill River taxpayer giveaway?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Mr. LaVie: Oh!

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) excuse me (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, this, again, is a repetition of the question that I have just answered.

There was no discussion that I took part in that had anything to do with what the –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – hon. member is referring to.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) snowball (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct) rules (Indistinct)

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

Mr. Dumville: Premier, I am applying again for permanent membership on three legislative committees, one being Public Accounts.

Obstructing request to sit on legislative committees

Will you instruct the Liberal majority on the special committee on committees to respect my constituents and not obstruct my request?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. members on all sides of the House participate in committees on their own accord and have their own processes and their own discussions.

To be very direct, I don't instruct –

Mr. LaVie: Oh (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – Liberal members or any other members as to what they should do in committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government's handpicked Health PEI board resigned just three weeks ago.

Interim trustee for Health PEI board

My question is to the minister of health: Have you found an interim trustee, yet?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) job (Indistinct)

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

Yes, we are talking to an individual about the trustee position and hope to have an announcement in the very near future, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. J. Brown: Oh, he's just setting him up, now.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the minister of health again: Your handpicked board resigned, and you now are running the whole show from your office.

Health concerns in Eastern Kings

Question to the minister of health: How will these unique concerns of Eastern Kings be heard in your new one-man show?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I can assure the hon. member on the opposite side of the House, it's not a one-man show in any way, shape, or form. We have a very capable and qualified executive leadership team that does the day-to-day work that they do with great due diligence, with great passion for Islanders' health care needs.

We have a wonderful interim CEO who's doing a spectacular job of getting things all lined up at Health PEI, as well as the day-to-day work of the deputy minister of health who steps up and does any role that she's asked to do on a daily basis, and then there's myself that helps everybody. We all work collaboratively; we all work cooperatively to ensure that Islanders' health care needs are being met to the best of our ability and that's what we wake up every morning to do and our proud to do every day.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When this government tries to peel back health services on PEI, it's always the east or the west that take the brunt of it all.

Lack of health services in east and west

Question to the health minister: How will you make sure that this doesn't happen this time?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In my earlier comments, I neglected to mention two other boards that are working very well on Prince Edward Island: our health engagement committees – one west and one east. I had the opportunity on Friday, I believe it was, to meet with the two chairs of those two engagement committees and they are very excited about – there will be members of the Health PEI board moving forward when the legislation changes.

Those two roles are coming into two chairs on the new health board and they're excited about that. Both of their committees are working very hard in their respective regions of the province. They are about a group of 10 and 10, so 20 Islanders with the best health care interests of all Islanders at heart, working hard in the past; we'll work hard in the future. And to have that representation on that new board is significant and we're very happy to have them.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With the ER closing in Montague, people in Eastern Kings with no doctors, no walk-in clinics in Eastern Kings – question to the minister of health: Will you make sure that there's somebody from Eastern Kings on the new board so that Charlottetown gets the message that we have concerns?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

This new board and its election and its structure will be very reflective of Islanders all across the province, from tip-to-tip. We currently the two chairs that will be part of that – one is from the east region; one is from the west region. We will build on that. We anticipate this board will be a very strong board full of individuals with great credentials.

Currently, we're fielding calls every day. Engage PEI, I believe, is taking applications as we speak. We look forward to a board that will work collaboratively with us in the department, and with Health PEI, and the executive leadership team, and the CEO so that Islanders' needs from one end of the province to the other are being met effectively, efficiently, to the best of our ability, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]