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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

WEDNESDAY, 26 JUNE 2019



Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

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

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

Yesterday, the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke was inquiring as to whether there's an evaluation of the changes made in the fee codes for walk-in clinics. The simple answer is yes, an evaluation has been done and this was a requirement of the Master Agreement.

I have here the MOU from the Master Agreement on the pilot project for the walk-in clinic fee codes, and I will table it during Tabling of Documents.

I also have some documentation here with regards to an overview of some of the things that were found in the evaluation, and I'd be happy to table that as well during that time.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I rise in response to Questions Taken as Notice from the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park regarding gender balance on boards. Information on corporate boards on PEI has proven challenging to access due to the lack of available public information.

Many companies on PEI are private not public, so they don't need to openly provide this information. There have been attempts to access this information in the past, but there is no way to force the private enterprise to share this information with government.

Nonetheless, a review of corporate boards on PEI by the PEI Coalition for Women in Government reveals that only 20% of the board members reviewed were women. Unfortunately, due to the challenging nature of contacting private companies to gather deeper information on board recruitment and policies, it is hard to access the potential for success with this category of board in PEI.

As Minister Responsible for Status of Women, I will commit to encouraging diversity in leadership and board compositions across PEI, especially as evidence shows that it is in a company's best interest. Diverse boards mean more successful companies.

Despite this challenge in the private sector, I am pleased that so far in 2019, 94 applicants have been appointed through Engage PEI onto government boards, such as Tourism PEI, the Seniors' Secretariat, Learning Partners Advisory Council and more. Of those 94 appointments, 52 or 55% of those women – were women.

This is a great start and I encourage all boards to achieve gender balance through social media, government advertising, and through the media we hope to reach more and more women to get them involved.

I look forward to engaging with the PEI Coalition for Women in Government and the PEI Business Women's Association on ways to encourage more women in leadership.

As I mentioned yesterday, I am pleased to commit to regular reporting on the prevalence of women on corporate boards and will include this information in the next Women in PEI: A Statistical Review.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning.

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

It was the Member from Morell-Donagh that had asked me a question about psychological assessments and education, and I have some information to bring back.

We've had 339 students on the list for psych-ed assessments, of which 30 of those will be completed by end of this summer. So, this year we've had 252 new referrals and closed 255 files.

Very important to note that in our recent budget, the one released yesterday after Question Period, we've increased the number of psychologists by 1.6 positions, and the wait time has decreased from 3.5 years just over two years ago, and we are on

track to meet our target of less than one year by 2020.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** I also wanted to bring back a response to the Leader of the Opposition's questions. The Leader of the Opposition was asking about the *Rental of Residential Property Act*, which of course we amended later on in the evening yesterday.

In January of 2019, the past administration requested that IRAC complete a review of the current act and recommend possible amendments. And then just this June, this month, IRAC proposed that the act should be completely repealed and replaced with a new, yet to be named bill. So, IRAC has contracted an external legal counsel to complete a Canada-wide scan of relevant acts and regulations and are targeting the complete of a draft bill by the end of August. At that time, as previously mentioned, there will be a need for robust consultation with stake holders, including the opposition, using the draft bill as a starting point.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

In response to a question from Friday from the hon. Leader of the Opposition regarding the status report of the implementation of recommendations with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. So I will be prepared to table a status report, just sort of outlining, in far too general terms what we've done.

I've asked my staff to go back with a list of, I believe, all 94 of the recommendations to find out the status of what has been done and the status of where they're at in the implementation phase. It has proven to be more challenging hon. leader than I would have initially thought; which leads again, further credence to the follow up question about putting somebody in charge to actually look after this on behalf of government.

So, I will table this in the tabling of documents section and I hope to come back tomorrow with the full report of where we're at with all recommendations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Questions by Members

**Speaker:** First question, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Again I want to start by extending my gratitude to the ministers for bringing back such prompt and full responses to questions taken as notice.

Last year, the previous government announced sudden and very large increases in the amount that individuals would pay to stay in publicly run long-term care facilities. Increases of 30% or even 40% were proposed, amounting to an extra \$10,000 or more in costs per year. The fee increase was arbitrarily implemented without any advance consultation or notice.

#### **Public review of PEI's long-term care policy**

A question to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness: Will your administration put the previous administrations planned increases on hold until a comprehensive public review of PEI's long-term care policy as undertaken

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

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for that very important question.

More and more Islanders are faced with loved ones in long-term care and we know financially it can be a burden. I've been very engaged in this file, even before I moved over to the government side of the floor, as an opposition member and I've had many meetings with individuals since becoming the Minister of Health and Wellness.

I have instructed my staff to take an internal look at this and actually do a thorough

analysis of it. I'm already on record in the media saying that I don't see us moving forward; past I believe it was the \$102 benchmark. But certainly when we have that analysis completed, I'd be more than happy to bring it forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you.

I'm happy, of course, to hear the hon. Minister's department is undergoing a review.

There are some really worrisome things about Health PEI's current policy in this area. I'm interested if this government is going to look into any of the policies that have caused upset and financial hardship to so many elderly Islanders and their families.

For example, it's not uncommon for one spouse to require long-term care, while the other may be able to remain in their home. Yet, Health PEI has a policy requiring spouses to cover any financial shortfall that may be incurred, obviously creating significant financial hardships for the spouses left at home.

To the minister: Is that one of the policies that you will be reviewing?

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

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

Again, I've gone through this just over the last several years with my own parents, who, I was essentially their primary provider as I had a constructed in-law suite and moved them in with me. Subsequently, their health turned and my mom went into a long-term care facility in August of 2016, and subsequently my dad moved into a long-term care facility on August 27, 2018, so I know what the hon. member is speaking of. I've gone through this financial analysis when I had to meet with Health PEI to look at my parents finances and review their taxes for the previous, I think two years.

It's something that we need to address with the federal government as well to see where the increases with regards to OAS and CPP and how that potentially is incorporated into their overall revenue.

I know I've talked a little bit longer than I should with regards to it being a fairly direct answer, but you know what, everything is on the table, we are prepared to sit down and analyze every policy with regards to this because first and foremost, we have to respect those that came before us and paid taxes here for many years on PEI and contributed to the social fabric of our wonderful Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

One of the other areas of concern is a combination fees in the long-term facilities. They are sort of equivalent of the rent that many Islanders pay for their living spaces, the costs of which, of course, are controlled by the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission which limits annual increases for rental properties.

As we know, increases in long-term care fees are not subject to IRAC oversight or eligible to appeal, hence the 30 or 40% sudden increase that we saw last year.

#### **Nursing home accommodations exempt from IRAC appeal**

To the same minister: Why are nursing home accommodations specifically exempt from IRAC appeal?

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

**Mr. Aylward:** The unfortunate situation that we've gotten into here is that the rates were not increased at all since; I believe it was 2012, so they did fall behind what the private facilities were charging. That's just one of the areas that we're going to be looking at.

With regards to IRAC and how that falls into play, I don't have that information readily at hand and I'd be more than happy to bring it back.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Internal memos that were made available to *The Guardian* earlier this month reveal that at one point Health PEI officials had conversations which the suggestion was raised that seniors in public long-term care facilities ought to be paying fees that more closely reflect the average rates paid by seniors in private care facilities.

Undoubtedly, such a change in pricing policy would lead to even further increases beyond those outlined publicly by the previous administration; increases in the order of \$20 per month.

### **Long-term care fees versus private facilities**

To the minister: Will you ensure that Health PEI does not pursue a policy to match public long-term care fees to those charged in the private facilities?

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

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

I'm extremely proud to be part of a new government led by this Premier and again, the common thread through the throne speech was caring for people. Completely went from the front page to the back page that was the theme of that document, was caring for people.

We have a new government, we have a new minister and I am committed to looking at this and making sure that any policy moving forward is going to be reflective of caring for people in a fair manner.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Of course, and I'm sure I speak for other members of this House, I was really pleased to see as part of the government's first budget that was tabled yesterday, a commitment to make available 100 new long-term care beds and facilities across this province.

However, as our elderly population continues to grow it's essential that government does everything in its power to ensure that more Islanders receive long-term care, not in facilities, but in their homes, wherever that is possible.

### **Investments into Home Care Program**

To the same minister: What specific investments will your government make to the provincial Home Care Program to achieve this goal?

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

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

Again, as many of the other members and ministers on this side of the floor have done, we've recognized the previous administration and some of the great work that they've done previously to us forming government. An example with that would be bringing in the paramedics, the EMS to help with regards to home care.

Again, I've worked closely with home care over my own parents' journey and they do provide a wonderful service. It's just another platform, it's another tool that we have to be able to ensure that our seniors are able to remain in their homes for a longer period of time and anything that we can do to support that, certainly this government is going to look at.

Again, caring for the people.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I believe that achieving this goal requires a reconsideration of how health care professionals assess senior suitability for home care.

For example, where a senior is assessed is often a critical determinant in their trajectory through the long-term care system. Indeed, a 2017 report from the Canadian Institute for Health Information, that I will be tabling later today, entitled Seniors in Transition - Exploring Pathways Across the Care Continuum, it shows that seniors assessed by health care professionals at home are considerably more likely to receive home care rather than seniors who were assessed in a hospital setting.

#### **Long-term care assessments re: seniors in own home**

To the minister: What steps will you take to ensure that long-term care assessments are conducted in a way that allows seniors every opportunity to remain in their homes?

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

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

Again, I am a huge proponent for the home care program and the wonderful work that these nursing staff do and the advancements around the paramedics that we've incorporated into this as well.

Yes, the hon. member is correct. Home care is a wonderful program and we want to keep our seniors in their homes as long as we can.

Some of the evaluations, unfortunately, are done because of just the pure safety of seniors. Some seniors would like to remain in their homes longer than they can, but at the same time, we have to take their overall health and security into play.

Another very important component of home care is when we have the public health nurses coming in to do med reviews with seniors. That's a great program, because if you can ensure that the seniors are still living in their own homes aren't being

overmedicated or mixing past and current medications, that's a real safety issue and I'm very proud of the work that home care works to do that.

But again, it's about caring for people and this government will continue to care for people and we will bring all the measures forward to ensure that our seniors have a dignified life.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

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

Health and safety concerns surrounding the renovations and impacts of asbestos and other particular breaches that occurred at Three Oaks Senior High School in Summerside have been discussed many times in this House since the construction began, and many times by the current Minister of Health and Wellness.

#### **Review of breaches during TOSH renovations**

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Since being appointed minister, have you had a chance to look into this issue further?

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

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

I have had briefings on the issue and I know our deputy chief health officer has done a considerable amount of work on it as well, so yes, I have looked into it.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

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

On November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018, the chief public health officer reported that they had completed a review of the breaches at TOSH and released a one-and-a-half-page summary of the findings that stated: There was found to be no significant student

exposure to lead, dust or asbestos during the review period.

This, of course, is fantastic news and I, along with the concerned parents, awaited the release of the full report that would explain and confirm these findings. However, that report never came.

### **Review report at TOSH not made public**

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Why was a complete report not made public?

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

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

Probably because I wasn't health minister then, but I stand here today and I commit to making it public.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

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

One of the first things I did after being elected as an MLA was to inquire into the whereabouts of the complete report of this review, essentially what was the review summary summarizing.

I have since been informed by a representative from your department – from the Department of Health and Wellness – that a formal report of this review does not exist, which would make it very difficult for you to bring forward.

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Can you confirm that there is no formal report of the health concerns during the construction at TOSH?

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

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

I stand up and stand behind the dedicated health care professionals that work in our

department. Not only the chief public health officer, but also the deputy, Dr. Sabapathy, and I would be more than happy to bring back further information on that tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

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

The short summary provided offers a conclusion, but doesn't state how this conclusion was reached, what information they reviewed, what was the review period, what methodology was implemented, how they chose to exclude information, such as lived experiences of students and other firsthand reports.

Essentially, parents are being asked to simply trust that there was no risk to students.

### **Review of breaches during TOSH renovations (further)**

Question to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness: Will you commit to an independent and comprehensive review to examine the impact and risks due to breaches and other issues that occurred during the TOSH renovations?

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

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

I certainly will commit here today to going back to my department to find out where this report is, how comprehensive it is and bringing everything back. This government, just like the hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture did last week, when he made the announcement that any loans over \$100,000, versus what it was before for \$1 million, will be public. This government operates on a basis of open books, transparency and will continue to do that.

So I will bring back the information.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

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

I'm pleased to hear that you will bring that information forward. I look forward to that, I'm uncertain as to what will be able to be brought forward as I've already inquired into this and there is apparently no full report. Should you find, as I've been told, that there isn't a complete report, would you commit to having a full independent comprehensive review conducted of the issues that happened during the TOSH renovations?

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

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

Certainly as the Minister Responsible for Health and Wellness, I will be going back to my department and I will be opening everything up and I will be demanding that all the documents that are within our department are made public, that you have my commitment.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere

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

All parties in this Assembly have previously provided unanimous support for a motion brought forward by the current Leader of the Opposition for a basic income guarantee in collaboration with the federal government.

The official opposition identified a commission to develop a PEI basic income guarantee pilot as a priority during the election and in our negotiations with government prior to this budget. In the budget address yesterday, we heard a commitment of \$225,000 to develop a PEI secure income pilot.

### **Basic income guarantee pilot**

A question for the Minister of Social Development and Housing: Is this government committing to a commission for

the development of a basic income guarantee pilot, or something different?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

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

When we look at the budget that was brought down yesterday and certainly the importance that was placed on, whether it was housing, whether it was seniors, various aspects right across our department – I have to say poverty elimination, affordable housing, women's shelters, they are not items that are specific to any one individual party, we all share those concerns.

With regard to specifically the question that the hon. member has posed, we have committed to a secure income pilot program. Having said that, as previous administration has done, we have made representation to the federal government for a partnership on a basic income guarantee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member of Charlottetown-Belvedere.

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

There is quite a difference between a basic income guarantee and a secure income. So, to qualify there has been significant and long-term work on a basic income guarantee in PEI with a number of community groups and experts putting in many, many years of work.

### **Commitment of a secure income pilot**

A question for the minister: Who was consulted in a decision to commit to a secure income pilot?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing:

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

The secure income pilot, certainly where it came out of, was with regard to the Poverty Reduction Action Plan and there was substantial consultation, right across the

province, on the Poverty Reduction Action Plan, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member of Charlottetown-Belvedere.

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

But I'm going to have ask the minister again: Are you discussing the commitment of the funding for a secure income pilot, or is this funding for a basic income guarantee because we're hearing two different conversations on two different topics. I understand the minister's description of secure income pilot, but the commitment for funding as sought by the official opposition was for a basic income guarantee commission, not a secure income pilot.

Could the minister please qualify?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

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

Yes, we do have to go back to the consultations that were carried out in the putting together the Poverty Reduction Action Plan.

If you look at the number of different recommendations that came forward from that action plan, the number of ones that have been acted on and are continued to be acted on, and whether we're looking at a basic income guarantee or whether we're looking at the secure income pilot program, we have to say that the consultations on both of them were extensive and happy that the previous administration did take that action in that direction.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

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

I would like to request that the minister please return to the House at his earliest convenience with a clarification as to the commitment for expenditure of \$225,000,

the scope of that commitment, the steps that will be involved in rolling out that pilot, and whether there is a commitment to an independent commission and chairperson for same.

**Speaker:** The Minister of Social Development and Housing.

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

Yes hon. member, I absolutely will.

Thank you.

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

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

Women's issues and women's health were two major concerns of Islanders I heard while campaigning and when speaking with people.

I know in the budget tabled yesterday under primary care, there's approximately an addition \$1.8 million allocated over last year's estimates and only \$1.6 million compared to last year's forecast.

However, that increase is shared amongst general administration, primary care program development, operations of provincially-owned healthcare centres, and the Women's Wellness Program. It's not clear if the Women's Wellness Program will be cut or enhanced.

My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness regarding the PC platform to promise and establish a PEI women's health strategy and \$5 million women's health fund. I reviewed the budget and could not find a provision for this fund.

#### **Budget provision for women's health fund**

Question to the minister: Could you confirm that the budget makes no provision for this promised fund?

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

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

I hate to sound like a broken record, but on this side of the floor we care for the people of Prince Edward Island and we have made a commitment.

No government is going to do everything in the first couple of weeks of the first year of their mandate. When you make a platform for an election, of course, there is a long-term plan to unfold over potentially a four-year period – hopefully a four-year period. That's what we're moving forward on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. McNeilly:** Well I'm glad the minister mentioned before analyzing every policy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The PC platform committed, actually, \$1.325 million in the first year. So I'm not sure I understand your answer. The health strategy – women's health fund in the first year – so this was in the first fiscal year.

Minister, why did your department in government decide a women's health strategy and funding was no longer an immediate priority?

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

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

This government certainly didn't find or all of a sudden come to the conclusion that it's not a priority, it is a priority with our government. Once we get into our budget within the health department, I think the hon. member will see the many great things, the details within our budget of the programs and the projects that we plan to unfold here on PEI to support women.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty your second supplementary.

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

We know where the money is going, and we just don't understand why it's being allocated to different areas. It's apparent that the introduction of a women's health strategy and \$5 million women's health fund has gone to the bottom of the government's priority list now that the election is over.

Minister, could you give the House and Islanders a line of sight to when the women's health fund will be up and running?

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

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

On this side of the floor, we made the conscious decision to put more emphasis on the frontline workers.

We've already talked about reinvesting a greater amount of money into primary care. That's something that the healthcare professionals here on PEI have been telling us that we need, is more of a focus on primary care.

We are investing and we will be investing into frontline healthcare workers to provide better care, not only for women but all Islanders.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

My question today is for the Premier: yesterday the government tabled a provincial budget, it is clear a number of PC platform promises were not addressed.

**PC party campaign promises ignored in budget**

Premier, could you inform the House who was involved in the decision to ignore many of the PC parties campaign promises?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It is difficult sometimes to sit here sometimes and bite your tongue to listen to some of the stuff that gets tossed across here; obviously we're in a very new situation here on Prince Edward Island. For the first time in our history, three parties making up a minority government trying to do the very best we can to give Islanders what they want.

Everybody put forward ideas; everybody on my side is a little bit disappointed. There's many people on the Leader of the Opposition's side who are disappointed and we keep hearing time and again about the people who were in government for 12 years who didn't do what they said they were going to do who are now disappointed because things aren't in the budget.

We can't give everything to everybody. We are trying to strike that balance, we thought we did things here that we've never done before.

We got input from other parties, I don't know what each house leader says when they go back to their caucus but the house leaders met and we devised a budget that gave everybody a little bit of everything. A lot of people are disappointed, this is everybody's budget, this just isn't the PC Party's budget and if it was there would be a lot of things different.

If it was the Green Party's budget there'd be a lot of things in here that would be different. If it was the Liberal Party's budget – well, we've seen that before.

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

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

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

In seven or eight priorities put forward and seeing part of one – I don't think that's very good collaboration.

Premier, you and your party made 120 promises in your party's platform during the election campaign.

**An Hon. Member:** 125.

**Mr. Mitchell:** You said in response to a question from the Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank on June 18<sup>th</sup> and I quote: There's a lot of promises in that platform we are not going to be able to do.

### **PC Party campaign promises**

Premier, could you inform this House which of those platform promises you will not be able to do?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Well there are a lot of platform promises in a lot of party platforms that will not get implemented and certainly not in the first year and I think that's reasonable for anybody to expect.

I've had lots of discussions with our internal caucus; many individuals here who are probably looking down right now would have liked to see us go a little faster with our small business tax rollback.

There are lots of people here who would have liked to see more things happen but there are lots of individuals on the opposition side who wished we would've done things a little bit quicker than what we're doing them and there are a lot of people from your party who feel the same way.

This is the first time in the history in Prince Edward Island that three parties have an implementation into a budget on Prince Edward Island which is a surplus budget.

You put forward your priorities, we have them written down, they're all in writing, we tried to do it the very best that we could for you, nobody from your side said: can you roll back the small business tax faster, they didn't say that.

We are just trying to do the very best that we can do, we think the end result is a pretty positive surplus budget that many people of Prince Edward Island are happy about.

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** Well, when a party makes political promises, they usually pride themselves in meeting those commitments.

**Progress updates for PC Party campaign promises**

Premier, will you be giving Islanders periodic progress updates on all of your 125 promises?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Well why don't we take all of the platform promises and roll them out who's got the most put in through. Let's roll it out, isn't that what we're here for? Isn't that what we're trying to do, to give the very best for Prince Edward Island?

Can I talk about rolling back the business tax? We've done it.

Can we talk about increasing the personal exemption? We've done it.

Can we talk about putting in a program for breast density for females suffering from breast cancer? We've done it.

I could sit here all afternoon and lay out the things that we've done –

**Ms. Compton:** – teachers.

**Premier King:** – teachers.

We said we'd get to 110 in four years, we're at 80 already, heaven forbid. I think we've done a lot of good things and you know what the Leader of the Opposition could stand up here and say: These are the things they put forward and these are the things are things that are in the budget.

The former minister and Leader of the Third Party could say: This is what we've wanted in the budget and it's there. I think that is a very good indication of how collaboration works and I can't wait to see how far it goes.

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

**Mr. Deagle:** Over the past number of weeks, I've been starting to hear from a number of people in my district and I'm sure other people have been getting their phones started ringing that are finding significant delays in the PEI home renovation program. They can't find out if they're getting approval or not.

**Delays in PEI Home Renovation Program**

Question the hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing: Can you tell us, are they behind on approvals?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

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

I'd like to thank the hon. member for that question. It does give me an opportunity to speak very briefly about the home renovation program. Its provided tremendous support to households right across our great province as far as being able to carry out improvements, renovations and enable ones to stay in their homes, certainly for as long as possible.

Over the last year, the previous year, there were 500 applications in total. So far this year as I understand it, there has been upwards of 1300 and that, in it of itself, certainly shows the importance, the uptake of this program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I do appreciate the background on the program but that's not what I asked. I asked why – are we behind on approvals. We're in the middle of the construction season now, it's getting going – we know how hard it is to find contractors. I'm hearing reports that people are having difficulty confirming whether they've been accepted for this year's intake.

Question to the minister: How long is the current backlog for this program?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

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

I do appreciate certainly where the hon. member is coming from. We're endeavoring

to have those backlogs in applications processed as rapidly as possible. My department has added additional staff for the processing and once again, endeavoring to have those applications processed as rapidly as possible.

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

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

Well the issue is, is that people are calling in and they're not getting a call back. They can't find out if they're approved or not. Construction season is short, contractors come and then they just move on to the next job site because they can't wait around.

Question to the hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing Minister: How are you going to fix this problem so seniors can get their homes fixed before winter gets here?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

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

Just to clarify on that, the home renovation program is not specifically for seniors as the hon. member has mentioned.

But just to reiterate, that yes, additional staff have been hired. Am I able to stand here today and say that all of these applications are going to be processed and information approvals and/or declines going out by a certain date? I am not.

What I would ask though of the hon. member, specific, and I'll put it out to everybody in the Legislative Assembly here that if there are questions coming forward from your district, from your constituents, please put them on to me. We will endeavor to get back as rapidly as possibly with the answers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Municipal growth management studies have been completed over the last several years to look at amalgamating or annexing communities to create larger regional municipalities. In yesterday's budget address, \$2.2 million was committed for community growth initiatives. This seems to signal that this new government has adopted the approach of the previous Liberal government. This is confusing since many current government members were strongly opposed to the approach while in opposition.

### **Plan for local governance**

A question to the hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities: Could you clarify what your governments plan is for local governance?

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

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank the hon. member for the question.

We are presently in year two of a five-year agreement on the *Municipal Government Act*. Our staff are working with the different municipalities on their approach forward to make this work in a more – we'll say, a more modern way.

Thank you.

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

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

We could not find a list of ongoing or upcoming studies on the provinces website. As several members of this government pointed out over the last few years while in opposition, it's important to local residents to know what's going on with these studies and they need to be engaged in that process.

### **Growth studies for rural communities**

Question to the minister: How many growth studies will be undertaken with this \$2.2 million and will the minister provide a publicly accessible list to them?

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

**Mr. Fox:** Well thank you for the question there hon. member. I will take that back to the department and come back with an answer for you tomorrow.

Thank you.

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

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

Many small rural municipalities, as the hon. member mentioned, are struggling to adapt. We are actually two and a half years through our five-year plan, and they're struggling to adapt to the act's requirements.

### **Supports for rural communities under MGA**

What additional supports will you provide to ensure that our rural communities can continue to operate under the MGA?

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

**Mr. Fox:** Well thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member, I want to be very clear that this government is not looking in any way shape or form or enforcing any amalgamation or annexation across the province, and we are presently working with municipalities.

I can tell you there are no applications before the government or before IRAC on any further amalgamation, but our department will continue to work with municipalities as they go forward and guide them through the *Municipal Government Act*.

Thank you.

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

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

I and the Green Party support changes to the MGA, particularly in the process for engaging and involving residents in the decision-making process. We included these in our platform, for example: in calling for a

plebiscite prior to an annexation or of an unincorporated area.

### **Changes to municipal reform process**

What changes to the municipal reform process will this government be introducing particularly when it comes to how residents are engaged?

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

**Mr. Fox:** Well thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well the hon. member raises a good question. Since taking over this new role, I have instructed the staff at municipal affairs to look at the act, to look at what was said in the past.

We are engaged with different municipalities across the Island, and we are reaching out to different people that have approached the department on questions around that subject. We are working with the individuals and it is our plan to continue that consultation.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford your final question.

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

While in opposition, members of the government voted en masse against the *Municipal Government Act*, and later introduced multiple bills to try to amend it. I assume at this point that this government does not intend to repeal the act, but the minister can correct me if I'm wrong on that.

Does the minister and his government intend to present amendments to the MGA, and, if so, will they be in place before the current batch of growth studies are completed?

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

**Mr. Fox:** Well thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to point out right off the bat that when we were in opposition, we didn't vote for *Municipal Government Act*, but the opposition – or pardon me the third party did vote with government on the MGA.

We are right now engaged with municipalities across the Island, we are talking to the stakeholders, and we are looking at the MGA and how to proceed forward in that manner.

Thank you.

[End of Question Period]