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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

THURSDAY, 27 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 raised some pertinent questions with regards to the renovation project at Three Oaks Senior High School. In response to those questions, I'd like just to add; as a parent myself, I can appreciate the concern students and parents have brought forward surrounding the construction at Three Oaks High School.

While we are confident, based on the findings to date, that students have not been subject to health risks, we know that we need to do better, be more transparent and proactive as a government going forward with major school construction.

That's why our government will work to establish a registry to confirm students who were enrolled at Three Oaks during the construction period in case this needs to be further reviewed at a later date. Families who are concerned about potential health impacts can choose to have students added to this registry.

I do commit to this House that I will be releasing the full report in the very near future once we have taken the appropriate steps of protecting personal information contained in the report as per the *Health Information Act*.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In response to a question last Friday from the Leader of the Opposition asking about an update on the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission findings and how they are being implemented here in Prince Edward Island, I'm pleased to offer that, as well as a status update of current programs to support these recommendations.

Do I do that now or do I do that after I have a full –

Speaker: Tabling of Documents.

Premier King: Okay, so – and once again, I apologize for the delay in getting it here but I'm certainly glad to be able to table it today.

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

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford asked how many growth studies have been undertaken to look at amalgamation or annexation of communities to create a larger, regional municipality.

Infrastructure funding through transportation and infrastructure renewal is available for municipalities considering these projects. As well, our department has resources to support communities in this area.

There have been two groups working on growth management studies recently; the West River group and the Evangeline area.

You asked what applications – there are no active proposals at this time. I can restate my comment from yesterday: 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*.

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Once again, I appreciate the timely responses.

I'm concerned about comments made by the Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture a few days ago.

When the minister referred to the province's economic plan and I quote: Being prepared

by the partnership for growth – I thought he had misspoken. However, the minister continued and again, I quote: We need a wide range of voices around that table, but we are in no position to dictate to the partnership who should be included in the discussion as we are only a member of the partnership.

Economic plan handed to business lobbyists

A question to the Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture: Why are you handing off the development of our province's economic plan to business lobbyists?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Member, like I say, this is six-weeks into it and I'm learning as I go every day here. So the first question the other day on the plan itself, obviously through our department itself, there has been some open discussion of where we can move forward on that. I don't think we're handing it off to anyone in particular. We're there for a partner with the group as well; obviously we're still working behind the scenes in our own department and bouncing ideas around.

Six weeks into it, I can't say I've a master plan over the term of our government here, but we're trying our best and we'll work hard every day to get there.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure under what circumstances we would ever give control over provincial planning to a group other than government. Government's job, of course, is to act in the public interest.

Government should be able to freely consult with community members and organizations as they feel necessary when it comes to new initiatives. After all, that's how we ensure that government's plans reflect the will of

our community and the makeup of our entire province.

Economic planning process re: stakeholders

Again, a question to the minister: Why would you accept an economic planning process where the government has no right to invite stakeholders to the discussion?

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

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Member, we're not giving up anything. This is working with everybody. Obviously, the hon. member from Morell has the lead in this, he's working, he's passing on ideas as well. Starting stage of this is open communication and I don't think anybody is excluded from it.

So feel free, like I say, if there is anybody that does feel they are excluded from it, please bring it to us and we'll work with it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I just want to go back to my very first question where I quoted the minister just from a few days ago where he said that the economic plan is being prepared by the partners for growth, not by government, but by this partnership for growth, so I need some clarification on that.

Five years ago when your party was in opposition, the current leader at that time told this House and again, I quote: I believe that our government should be providing the leadership to move on economic development and to listen to our business community when they present sound advice for policy initiatives in economic advancement. It's astonishing that the only economic plan being developed for our province is being initiated by our chambers. That was a quote from the leader of your party at the time.

It looks to me as though this government is doing exactly the same thing that it criticized the previous government from doing.

Leadership on file

Question to the minister: Why did your party change its mind about providing leadership on this file?

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

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you hon. member.

The last thing I think anybody would compares us to is the previous administration. We're six-weeks into this and some of the changes we've made already have been phenomenal.

One of my department alone is with the loan is with the loan write-offs at \$100,000. We're only six weeks into this and every day I go to work to learn. We're sitting with our colleagues and our staff; we've opened up to opposition parties as well. This was all open discussion, this is early days. So to say we have a master plan at the end of it, I'd be sitting here and I can say not, we don't. This is just the start.

I'm sorry you're feeling that way, but like I say, to be compared to a previous government – we've gone above and beyond in the last six-weeks and we're just going to continue moving forward.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Partnership for growth re: plan

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

I just want some clarification, minister and I'm going back to my first question again, when you were referring to the development of the provinces economic plan, this is what you said: the plan is being prepared by the partnership for growth. Could you tell us what you meant by that, minister?

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

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Member, I probably misspoke on that. Like I say, it was the first question that came out possibly maybe the second – it took me a minute to clue into what we were even talking about at the time, so I'd say it was more my wording as a mistake and I do apologize for that.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

On May 9th when the Premier announced his cabinet, he also announced that he had tasked the Government House Leader with a special commission, to work with the 21 members of the partnership for growth and other community organizations to realize the vision for sustainable economic growth on Prince Edward Island.

In this capacity, the MLA will work with his cabinet colleagues and all members of the Legislative Assembly.

Government House Leader's role with commission

Question to the Premier: Can you provide more details on the Government House Leaders role with regards to this commission?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

Thank you to the hon. member for the question.

All of us as we were running in the election campaign were presented with this partnership for growth that was put forward by 20 community groups – to refer to them as lobbyists, I think would be a mistake. These are individuals from all across PEI, from all across the economic sectors, who are looking to band together to provide some good vision as we move forward with our economy.

One of the commitments they asked us to do, all of us as a party, was to put forward a

commitment to actually help with that process. I couldn't think of anybody more skilled and talented than the hon. House Leader, from Morell-Donagh to be able to work with all of those individual groups, with all of those people who will come forward.

With all of those who will be asked to participate and the go forward plan has always been to try and do the very best we can for Prince Edward Island and to make sure this economy is strong, so that we can make the investments that Islanders want us to make, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

One thing that I found puzzling in the Premier's announcement was the phrase that the government House Leader was and again, I quote: To work with his cabinet colleagues. That struck me because the House Leader is actually not a member of Cabinet, not a member of Executive Council and he does not work for the executive branch. So, strictly speaking, he is not a cabinet colleague at all.

Role of Government House Leader

Question to the Premier: Will the House Leader be sitting in on Cabinet meetings and acting as an agent of government? Or, will he retain his independence as a private member of this Legislature?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Mr. Speaker, obviously not and only the members of Cabinet will sit in and take part in Cabinet.

The hon. House Leader, when I refer to as Cabinet colleagues, I mean those individuals who are his colleagues who are in the Cabinet. Obviously, so to be able to split hairs a little bit here to utilize the line of questioning, to try and create something that isn't there, I think is not accurate.

As I say, I have nothing but fantastic respect and belief in the Government House Leader to be able to carry through his duties and I

would say what we've been able to accomplish in just a few days in this Legislature with all of the House Leaders who are working there, my colleague is one of those, I think is a testament to what we're doing here differently, it's a testament to the abilities of all the house leaders and I don't think this gentlemen takes a backseat to anybody, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I appreciate the clarification Mr. Premier but let's talk about something that very much is there because of this position.

One of the nice things about government, it is included under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* which means that government has requirements to preserve and produce records that the public can request, which helps, of course, in all of us holding government account.

The Legislative Assembly is not covered by FOIPP, so not only is this economic plan being led by private organization who are not covered, of course, by the freedom of information legislation. The government lead on this initiative is a private member whose records, I suspect, are equally exempt from the freedom of information legislation.

Economic plan and transparency

A question to the minister: You've indicated to this House that you will support transparency wherever possible, why would your government develop an economic plan using a process that is not subject, at all, to the highest levels of transparency.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

Premier King: I'd like to answer that Mr. Speaker because I believe –

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

I believe there is a bit of, an unintended sinister nature to the suggestion that we're trying to do something here in secret, which is exactly what we're not doing.

The partnership for growth is all across Prince Edward Island, community groups, individuals, leaders who want to do the best they can for Prince Edward Island. We're trying to work with them to encourage them to provide advice; absolutely nothing is done in secret.

I'm not sure of the FOIPP requirements that are here but I think it's fair to suggest that I could ask the Government House Leader to make sure any information that he is talking about when it comes to the partnership for growth can be shared with anyone in this House.

There's absolutely no secrets here; as I say, we're just trying to do the very best we can to make sure the economy of Prince Edward Island stays strong for the years going forward.

Speaker: The hon. member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Housing is an issue that I hear about almost more than any other issue in Summerside. I was pleased to see the significant commitment to dollars invested for building new housing, but I have some questions about the process for how that money will be used.

Issuing of RFPs for new housing projects

A question to the Minister of Social Development and Housing: Can you advise the House if new RFP's will be issued for these projects?

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

Mr. Hudson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm sorry hon. member, I did not catch the last part of your question.

Speaker: Then hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question to the minister of Social Development and Housing was: Can you advise the House if new RFPs will be issued for these projects?

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

Mr. Hudson: That would be my full intention.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Number of housing units for Summerside

Question to the Minister of Social Development and Housing: Could you advise the House on the number of units planned for Summerside?

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

Mr. Hudson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't have the exact number, but I will bring that back to the House and to the member tomorrow.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The variety of needs for housing runs the spectrum.

Question to the minister of Social Development and Housing: Can you provide an update on what percentage of the new units that will be planned for Summerside are affordable or accessible?

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

Mr. Hudson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, my apologies, I don't want to give an indication that is not completely accurate, so

I will bring that information back tomorrow as well.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I completely appreciate that.

Ensuring that an appropriate percentage of the new housing stock is accessible takes planning, and, in many jurisdictions, it's legislated.

Inclusionary zoning

Question to the minister of Social Development and Housing: Are you familiar with inclusionary zoning?

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

Mr. Hudson: Again, I'm sorry member, I did not catch the very end of your question.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: My apologies for that, I'll try to speak up.

I'm wondering if the minister is responsible – excuse me, is familiar with the term inclusionary zoning?

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

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

Again in all honesty, I am not.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Inclusionary zoning mandates that a certain percentage of developments are affordable or accessible.

Question to the minister of Social Development and Housing: Would you

consider including some similar inclusionary criteria in these new RFPs or any other housing projects supported by the province?

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

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

Thank you for the brief lesson there with regard to the term.

Certainly as we move forward on housing initiatives, whether it's for seniors, whether it's for low-income, and I've said before, I am more than happy to take anything under consideration. I'd be extremely happy to meet with you at some point in time to have discussion on this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Employment Development Agency offers wage support and job opportunities seasonally for students and through rural initiatives. Individuals who have faced labour market barriers and challenges are supported to succeed in employment through these opportunities, and many not-for-profits and small businesses also benefit.

Process of job allocations through EDA

Question to the Minister of Fisheries and Communities: Can you describe the process through which jobs are allocated – sorry job allocations are made through the EDA?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

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

The staff actually at our EDA actually work with the non-profit groups and other applicants as they put forward their request, and it's based on a need and also based on the population or where the needs are across the province.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Regional EDA staffs assess applications and distribute available job opportunities to individuals who have faced labour market challenges and assign job allocations for non-profits in small businesses, just as the minister described.

Role of MLAs in allocation process

Question to the Minister of Fisheries and Communities: What role can or should MLAs play in this allocation process?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

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

Any MLA that receives a request should actually forward that on to our staff, and then they will do the placement and look at the application on a need-to-need basis.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Since being elected, I have been approached by multiple individuals as well, as a wide range of organizations and businesses who are under the impression that I, as the MLA for the district, am the gatekeeper for gaining access to jobs through the EDA.

Question to the Minister of Fisheries and Communities: Why do you think these individuals and organizations believe that MLAs have a direct role in EDA job allocation?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

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

That's a good question, I think that all MLA's should point their constituents who have requests for employment into the proper staff within the Department Fisheries and Communities and let the staff place the people on a need-to-need basis.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Clearly there are ethical concerns involved when individuals are under the impression that an MLA gave them a job, such that they may feel obligated to vote a certain way to gain or maintain employment.

Question to the Minister of Fisheries and Communities: Given that we agree that MLA's should have no direct involvement in job allocation through the EDA, what do you intend to do to ensure that MLA's don't exert improper influence in allocating these jobs?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Staff has been directed in the department that if a request comes forward by an MLA to look at it, go over the guidelines and the proper practices of the department and follow them guidelines and practices.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Howard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Targets for energy from renewable sources

In the PC platform it says and I quote: A Dennis King PC government will work with Islanders to make a commitment to achieve a carbon-neutral society. That commitment will include targets for consuming a fixed percentage of our energy from renewable sources.

Question to the minister: what are these targets?

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll have to be honest, I don't know what the targets are but I can tell you what we're doing. As you know, we have wind farms right across the Island here; we are in the early stages of bringing another one online; we are kind of in a planning part of that

now. When that's done that's going to increase our wind capacity by quite a bit.

There are all kind of different proposals that come through energy every single week that may address this issue that talk about how we may store energy because we know that wind has peak times and that sometimes we need to store the energy to be able to use at the off-peak wind producing times.

While I don't know the targets, I can tell you that there's a whole department up there that's working diligently everyday to help bring more wind online and deal with some of these issues.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Howard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In order to hit our target of a carbon-neutral society, we will need to undertake an immediate and large scale transition. We have half a million dollars committed to engage Islanders in this transition and so far as energy solutions accessible to Islanders go, this will put a few solar panels up across PEI, which is good, but nothing more significant that what has already been happening every year on PEI.

Will the minister commit to setting evidence based targets and making the green infrastructure investments necessary to achieve those goals?

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So since Jamie Ballen brought windmills to this province, we have been committed to doing exactly that and what I've talked about here in my first answer was exactly that, we are doing that, we're bringing more wind online and it's going to be a great addition to wind power here on Prince Edward Island. It's going to be a really good opportunity for Prince Edward Island to produce more green energy right here on Prince Edward Island.

On top of that as you mentioned, the solar program that we already talked about that's going to be a residential solar program, we

at this point don't know what the uptake is. As I've said, I wanted to be aggressive, as I said I wanted to reach as many people as I can, this is only the beginning.

As the program goes on year after year, we'll see what we have to do to change to bring more people into it to be more efficient, what changes we need to make to allow groups to create their own power together. Those are things that you and I have talked about, but those are things that I think are important.

I think we're doing a lot of the work, I think we have a lot of the plans and we're going to continue to go down that (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

My question was about setting some of the targets. We used to have some targets built into our *Renewable Energy Act* and we had those removed just because we had already hit those targets and there was not really any need to report back that we had already hit those targets, so I would encourage the minister and set some new targets.

Success in targets for green energy

If we don't know the targets, how will we know if we succeeded?

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You want me to measure it on a specific target and that's fine, I'll take it back to the department, but I do think that we are doing great things and I do think that we have a department that's trying really hard to get greener and they've been doing it for a long time.

Like I said, we have another windmill farm that's coming online and there's a plan for another one even further down the road than that, that's going to bring us even more energy to our grid.

So we have long-term plans in the department, all this stuff costs money, these are major, major investments that we have to make in order to do that. These projects are

big, it takes a long time, we have to work with communities, we have to work with landowners, we have to get approvals from people to bring a wind farm of this size into their community. That's where we are today with our current one, the ones we have in the future, down the road, we do even have planned sites for yet. But those are kind of, all in continually in the work so.

A measurable target fine – like I said, we'll go back and talk about (Indistinct) the measurable target, but that doesn't mean we don't have plans and that doesn't mean we're not trying to grow our sustainable energy here on Prince Edward Island, because we are.

Speaker: The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is actually for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Under Community Hospital West section in the recent budget, it only shows a 1.7% increase to the budget over last years, with most of those increases assigned to salaries and administration. The PC Platform: It's all about people, promises to expand cancer care by offering intravenous treatments at hospitals in each county and recruit more oncologists.

Commitment of cancer treatment in Western PEI

For people in rural Prince Edward Island, this is important but yet I don't see any increase to the budget for this particular commitment. Minister, when will that commitment for cancer treatment services be implemented in PEI and specifically, when will that service be offered in communities in Western Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I'd like to thank the hon. member for the excellent question. Yes, that was certainly in our platform and we intend to fulfill that

commitment. As the previous minister of health yourself, you would know the recruitment process can be a little bit (Indistinct) and we're certainly continuing round recruitment on that and I look forward to being able to announce here at some point in time during our mandate, but sooner than later, that we will be rolling out that very important aspect of cancer treatment across the Island.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

Mr. Henderson: Of the 125 PC promises in their platform, this commitment is for cancer patients, probably our most vulnerable people that require in health care. PC Platform promises do not specify how this initiative would be rolled out.

Cancer treatment availability to all Islanders

Minister, maybe you can give us a little more information: Will this service be rolled out to all community hospitals at the same time? And when will, and how will, Health PEI decide the first community hospital to be providing this service to rural Islanders if it's not all at once.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

The intention of this government will be to have this service available in various locations across Prince Edward Island. Obviously, currently, we already have it in Charlottetown and Summerside but we'd like to have it as well offered in King's County, Prince County.

The target for that is definitely within our mandate and what we're going to be doing internally, along with, I already said around recruitment of those specialized health care professionals, but we will be working internally as well with those health care facilities to ensure we have the proper infrastructure in place and the space. We just can't simply take and set up a mobile and provide it there. This is very important

work, its critical work for Islanders that are suffering from a terrible disease. We will do it compassionately and we will do it properly.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from O’Leary-Inverness, your second supplementary.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. minister would well know, the community hospital in O’Leary has a new training lab, an ambulatory care RN already in place and these investments were done by the community and many by the hospital foundation and it has reduced wait times in our emergency rooms in Prince County and Western hospitals.

The O’Leary hospital foundation is also very eager in supporting the purchasing of new equipment for any new particular services, as the minister would well know.

Support from O’Leary hospital foundation

Minister, would you not agree that O’Leary with a central West Prince position and location would be a perfect spot, to either pilot this service to Islanders in Western PEI and what particular equipment would be required to support this particular service, and we could get this up and running very quickly, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

And again excellent question, I was very happy to have toured that facility not that long ago, just within the last couple of weeks and I expect before I sit down, I’m already going to have an email from Eva Rodgeron on this very subject.

But you know, the foundations we have across Prince Edward Island, the incredible work that they do. I mean, an announcement was made last night by the St. Dunstan University Board where they committed to \$500,000 towards purchasing of equipment.

The foundations, as I said, do incredible work so as we move forward and we determine what those services are actually going to be, along with through consultation with the professional healthcare providers, I’ll be better able to advise the hon. member of the exact type of equipment and locations that will be establishing these centres in.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question’s for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

The PC platform promises to provide a \$500 wellness and activity tax credit to help all Islanders improve their overall health and wellbeing.

Minister: Could you inform the House how much this tax credit will cost your government this year and how many Islanders can take advantage?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

The hon. Premier.

An Hon. Member: Oh, here he is.

Premier King: No, I just think – I find a trend coming here from the Third Party. I think it’s their hesitancy to adjust to the new style of politics that Islanders want us to play.

Mr. MacDonald: Answer the question.

Premier King: We are in a minority situation. I say it again –

An Hon. Member: It’s your platform.

Premier King: It’s our platform. How many recommendations from your platform have not been implemented?

An Hon. Member: We’re not the government.

Premier King: Well, we’re not the government either.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Premier King: We're all the government. This is a minority government, and Islanders want us to work together so there's a lot in our platform that hasn't been implemented.

There are lots in the Green platform that hasn't been implemented. There's a whole lot from yours that have not been implemented, but guess what? We're all trying to work together.

We're all trying to do the very best we can, and in what consultation process do you get everything that you want? In what negotiation do you go through with three parties that you get everything that you want? That's not the way that it works.

Islanders want us to work together. They want us to work differently here. We didn't get to all of them.

We're six weeks into government. It didn't say in the platform we're going to deliver this on June 27th, give us time to get there. Give us time to work together.

Let's work together.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank your first supplementary.

Mr. McNeilly: Just something in the first year, just something. Just one thing.

Mr. MacDonald: So it says about the people, perhaps it should say about the platform.

Some Hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. MacDonald: This is not in the budget, that's why I'm raising it. It's in the platform. It's not in the budget, but it was talked about.

Quote the Premier, April 12th: They feel that they have a significant tax burden and that they've carried for a long time. Now that our economy is turning around, it's time to share some of that success with Islanders.

We've sat here school lunch program, women's health fund yesterday and now the \$500 wellness activity tax credit.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: Is there a trend? There's no trend over here, the trend is on that side of the House.

Could the minister inform the House when the government intends to deliver the \$500 wellness and activity tax credit?

An Hon. Member: Next budget.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Once again, we are here trying to work together.

What Islanders said was guess what? We don't want any one party to run this show. We've seen that for too long.

We don't like the results of that, so let's do this. Let's send three parties into the Legislature and let's make them work together, which is very easy for me because that's what I've been promoting since I started to run. Let's work together.

I have to take a little water in my wine. If the people of Prince Edward Island said: I want you to implement the entire Progressive Conservative platform, they would have given us a majority of seats, but they didn't. They could have wanted the Green Party to put in their entire platform, they would have given them the majority, but they didn't.

So we have to work together. We have to take a little water in our wine. You've taken some, the Green Party's taken some, and the government has taken some. We can't do it all for everybody.

The former minister was in the position, he knows. You can't give it all to everybody, but have we delivered? Absolutely. Ten suggestions from the opposition party, guess what? We implemented them. We didn't give them all they wanted, but we give them a little bit.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Recommendations from you, we give you a little bit, we didn't give it all, but guess what? We're working together and we're getting there.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank your second supplementary.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just a further note to the recruitment, you talked a little bit about with the other minister on recruitment. Year to year estimates show that a measly \$52,000 has been added to recruiting, so it's going to be tough to fill some of the issues that he had.

But let me say – this is new in a collaborative government, but prior to this it was old-time politics because what they've done is they've promised the world and now they're not going to deliver and they're hoping Islanders forget about all of these promises.

But I can tell you this side of the House, including the opposition, are not going to let them forget because these are important – these are some of the issues that are – this food program, women's health fund, the \$500 wellness tax credit – the hon. Premier got up and spoke about him going to the gym. We all can't afford personal trainers. We need those tax credits.

Implementation of tax credit

I ask again to the hon. Premier: When is he going to implement the \$500 tax credit?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member could afford a personal trainer from the past four years of his salary.

But anyway, we'll move forward. As I say, our plan would be to try our very best to implement all of the platform that we have put forward, but realizing that we're in a different time – we're in a different climate. Islanders have asked us to work together and I would think what we have been able to do in a very short time is something extraordinary.

When I go to the grocery store, Islanders stop me and they say: I can't believe how

well it's working. I can't believe you're working together so well. I hope you can keep it up.

To quote the late Helen Keller: Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.

Get on board, third party. Get on board – there's so much we can do together.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Donagh.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We'll keep the onslaught coming here.

Last fall I'd asked a question of the government without identifying a minister and I did so to prove a point. It was to prove a point about the lack of coordination around autism services.

Minister responsible for autism services

So with your indulgence, I'm going to ask again of this government: Which minister will be responsible for autism services in the province?

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

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To answer the member's question, I am the minister responsible.

I remember when the member was on the floor with Peter Rukavina last fall bringing this excellent act to the Chamber which did pass so the *Autism Coordination Act* that was enacted in the fall will have an autism coordinating committee of deputy ministers. That's what it establishes, and they will be reporting to me as minister.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Donagh, your first supplementary.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, minister, for that answer.

Under the former government, there was an *Autism Coordination Act* kind of working

group that was formed from deputy ministers and that type of thing and they met a few times and they were starting to implement the process.

But one thing that seemed to be absent from it was input from private groups and from private organizations.

Will the minister commit to making sure that this coordination committee will involve the people with autism and those supporting them in all of their discussions and planning as they lead up?

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

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're just at the beginning of this file, but my deputy minister has met with Mr. Peter Rukavina to start off with and what we're looking at now is getting an Executive Council order to authorize the autism coordinating committee to meet and Peter is going to go and present his discussion to the Autism Society and Stars for Life.

But, what we've also done is we had something that we're calling – it's a little jargoned – but a committee of government depth that has done an inventory of all the services offered that are related to autism and now we're going to decide how best to consult with those, especially the people who have autism, their supporters and the various different autism groups. I look forward for input from the member as to how we consult and who we consult with, as well as from the different parties and opposition.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Donagh, your second supplementary.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To be quite honest, I think that Executive Council order – that memo should have been done already and I appreciate the expediency on that.

Peter Rukavina is a fantastic advocate, but there's a lot more out there than just Peter and he would admit to that too. Let's keep all of the people involved.

Another part of this was about accountability.

Annual public reporting on progress

Will the minister reaffirm the government's responsibility to accountability under the *Autism Coordination Act* and commit to annual public reporting on the progress that's made?

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

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll commit to getting the authorization order for the Autism Coordinating Committee to Executive Council as soon as possible, hopefully the next meeting. Of course, I will commit to providing that annual report, to show that the government is accountable to those who are on the autism spectrum.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Howard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Uptake of electric vehicles

Another action item that Islanders can help with is the electrification of transportation. In the government platform, it's mentioned that incentivizing electronic vehicles will be pursued. I see no mention of it in the budget or in the throne speech. In light of a lack of funding to create incentives, how will the government be working to encourage the uptake of electric vehicles by Islanders?

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad I get to come here every day and learn what was in our platform because I don't know if I read it as close as everyone else here did, but I'm still here and still needed here.

So like the Premier talked about earlier and I've talked about this already in this session alone, not all promises are going to be delivered this year. The one that I'm the most committed to and I've talked to this Assembly here about it, is solar and I've

said openly that the next phase in my opinion and the next natural phase is how do we get people into electric cars?

We've been trying to buy them here in government and it takes six weeks for us to get one. You know, we want to get a program that we work together with the car companies here, the people that are selling cars here, so that we make sure that they have them on the lot whenever we announce this.

We want to make sure that we have charging stations put across Prince Edward Island and we want to make sure there's a major uptake in our solar programs so that people can become self-sufficient, where they can go home and they can plug in and charge their car with their own electricity. So we haven't forgot about it, I want to get this first step done first; I'll work with you on the second step just like I'm working with you on the first step.

Speaker: The hon. member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Howard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Time is against us in the effort to transition. The time for small measures is past. If we're serious about getting to our goals we need to take action as soon as possible.

Large sums of money have come to the government from Federal partnerships, such as the Low Carbon Economy Fund and the Investing in Canada Plan, that are available to be used to help transition us towards a low carbon economy.

Breakdown and allocation of funds from federal partnerships

Will the minister commit to providing a break down on what funds have come in from these and where they've been allocated?

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

Mr. Myers: Yes I will, I'll bring back whatever has gone through our efficiency program. I think that the minister of environment actually gets that money; we just get to spend it for him. But I will bring

back to the House what we spent out of those funds, what we have allocated and what our plans are going forward.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In this budget, the PC government announced 74 new front line workers for the education system.

Timeline for new front line workers

Question to the hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning: When will the people hired to fill these new positions begin work?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The member across, as a former teacher herself or a current teacher I guess, waiting to maybe go back some day – the current staffing process is continuing as it normally would. What we did was we had to issue a memo to allow them to staff the status quo because of course, there was no budget tabled by the previous government when the election was called. So that put them a lot behind and now the principals are required to spend some time staffing this summer and they're going to staff as soon as possible.

I'll have to go back to the Public Schools Branch to find out exactly what deadline they have and the Commission Scolaire de Langue Francaise to see if they have a deadline but they would be starting work this fall when school commences.

Speaker: The hon. member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Ms. Bernard: When I spoke with different principals I asked about status quo and they actually weren't told the staff status quo, they were actually told to staff based on the numbers from the previous government, so they were actually down.

Summary of current staffing formula

A question to the minister: Can you please provide us with a summary of the current staffing formula used to staff schools.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That is an interesting point. My memo and my memory and I should get the memo and table it, was to staff according to status quo numbers, but as you do point, there was a draft budget in which the teaching numbers were down from the previous administration.

What I'll do is I'll get the ministerial directive that really guides the staffing process and I'll table it. There are some changes that need to be made there and I don't know the details off the top of my head. One of the ratios I know that the member is really interested in is the 400:1 ratio for students to school counselors and of course that's one we need to look at and change.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, your final question.

Ms. Bernard: On May 24th principals were told their staffing numbers for next year, they were also told there were more positions coming, they are still waiting.

As a result, principals and vice-principals have been scrambling to figure out how to meet the needs in their schools for next year and will be forced to volunteer their time this summer hiring staff.

As a result of election timing and the date of budget release, schools are in a panic.

Commitment of fixed election dates

Question to the Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning: Will your government commit to fixed election dates to ensure that this stressful mess does not happen again?

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: I think the reaction on this side of the House and the reaction from that side of the House is a definite resounding support for that question and I can give an unequivocal yes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]