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

FOR

WEDNESDAY, 3 JULY 2019



Response to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

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

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

You spoke earlier in your comments about the importance of volunteerism here on our Island and one of the biggest and most important volunteer communities are our firefighters. Timely responses to emergencies can mean quite literally, the difference between life and death.

Many Island fire departments rely on pagers to alert their members to incidents and to ensure that response times are as quick as possible. We recently learned that the pager system relied on by 13 Island fire departments and provided by Bell was discontinued just yesterday and that these departments must now rely on text and email to alert their members to incidents.

**Discontinuation of pager service for fire departments**

A question to the hon. Minister of Justice and Safety and Attorney General: When did your department receive notice that Bell would be discontinuing this service?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General.

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

To the member opposite, our department found out in – well it's been 10 years since Bell has said this is coming and last November the Department of Justice and Public Safety was notified and the fire departments were notified then. I agree with you, I have empathy for our volunteer fire fighters; they work hard to keep our Island safe.

So, last November and then January they were notified again. February we had a meeting. March they were notified again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** So there were many warnings and notice given to the department that this pager system on which the fire departments rely was about to be discontinued.

Bell is actually required to give at least 60 days notice before discontinuing such a service. Reports indicate that discussions with Bell, as the minister just verified, surrounding the termination of this service have been ongoing since at least November of last year.

**Replacement to pager system**

To the same minister: Given the critical nature of these services and the necessity for a rapid and reliable communication system for members who provide these services, why has this vital part of the emergency protective system been allowed to lapse without a suitable replacement?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General.

**Mr. Thompson:** Mr. Speaker and the member across, I acknowledge that 13 fire districts haven't complied, but 23 have. The 13 that haven't, we are working with them and there is funding now through – it's a community matter.

It's a local government – fire departments are local government, and there is funding through Minister Fox's department, through communities, and we are working with those to help them get that funding together to get their systems upgraded.

I met with the Fire Marshal this morning and he assured me that all fires on Prince Edward Island will be – all firefighters are able to get called to fires today and he assured me that all fires would be taken care of.

Thank you.

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

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

Indeed, it's a municipal affair, but you're the minister of justice and safety, safety of all Islanders.

Many firefighters who work in places where cell phones are not permitted or – and we all know how very easy it is to accidentally disable your cell phone or leave it unattended or the battery runs down or some other incident.

### **Cell phone replacement for firefighters**

So does the minister think that this interim measure of relying on our cell phones is an appropriate and safe way to protect Islanders' property and indeed, potentially their lives?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General.

**Mr. Thompson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member across.

Yes, I know the importance of the hardest working people are these volunteer firefighters. They respond at a moment's notice. They hop up and go to the darkest of darkest of situations.

Meeting with the Fire Marshal today it gave me relief that he told me that the matter is – he understands the situation and he's ensured me that all fires would be responded to in a timely matter and that gives me piece of mind.

We are working with the people that the fire departments haven't complied yet to get funding through Mr. Fox's department. Wellington recently got \$25,000 to upgrade their pager system, and so we're hoping that the 13 that are left of the 36 can obtain this. We'll fast track this funding, and hopefully it'll appease your situation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I'm really glad to hear that the minister has met with the Fire Marshal and that there are communications between his department and the communities and fisheries department on funding to correct this problem, because if things were fine of

course there would be no need to replace the system.

But the very fact that we're having discussions about having to update for those 13 departments who do not have the reliable system, tells us that there is indeed a problem.

### **Timeline for reliable system for safety of Islanders**

Again to the minister: How long before we can expect all fire departments across PEI to be furnished with a comprehensive and reliable system that will ensure the safety of all Islanders?

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

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

Thank you, hon. member, for his question.

I have actually been talking with the other department on this issue, and this morning I directed the staff of rural development to reach out to the 13 affected fire departments and find out actually what their needs are for going forward. We do have programs that are available and we are encouraging them to apply to the department if they require equipment upgrades.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

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

As of late, every few days we're hearing about someone in Summerside who is struggling to find appropriate housing. The amount of cases that are in crisis, that is that are on the verge of becoming homeless, is significant.

Last week, we heard that 69 new units either will be or already have been built in Summerside. The nine seniors units that were already built and are already filled are great, but really cannot be counted towards alleviating the current backlog.

### **New housing units in Summerside**

Question to the Minister of Social Development and Housing: Can you tell me how many of those new units are already spoken for?

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

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

I do appreciate that question from the hon. member. As I've said in this House before, anytime one family or one individual is homeless on this Island it's a crisis for them. And, if it's a crisis for them, we have to address it.

With regard to the exact number that the member has put the question forward on, I will take that under notice and I will get the exact numbers information for the House tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

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

It doesn't take many phone calls to find out that the waitlist right now in Summerside is well beyond the 30 units that are planned for seniors and the 30 mixed houses.

### **Filling needs gap for housing**

Question to the minister: I am wondering if we have any ideas on how we're going to fill the needs gap in the meantime for Summerside.

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

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

It is, it's a priority, our staff, whether it's with regard to the 1833 number, whether it's with regard to working with our community partners, Salvation Army, Bedford MacDonald House, Blooming House, these are all part of that big puzzle that has to fit together in order for us to address this and it is, it's an urgent need, I will certainly admit that.

It's been something that having been in this ministry, if you like, for the last seven weeks, I'll be honest, it's been a real eye-opener to me. With that, I fully realize the priority, but we do have to put on this, have been putting on it and will continue to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

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

I entirely can appreciate that solving the housing crisis is going to take time, but in the meantime, as you said, we've had people who are in crisis which is why the last government brought forward the emergency shelter line for Charlottetown with the intent of expanding it across the Island.

Here we are six months later and I can't find any evidence that the emergency support system actually exists outside of Summerside.

### **Homelessness and temporary shelter**

Question to the Minister of Social Development and Housing: Can you clarify whether or not people in Summerside facing homelessness can only receive temporary shelter if they're willing to be transferred to Charlottetown.

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

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

Certainly, that is my understanding, hon. member. I will do a double-check on that and if there's anything different from that I will certainly inform the House tomorrow.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

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

We don't have any shelters in Summerside, you just listed a long list of potential gap fillers that exist in other places, but none of those exist in Summerside.

There are many legitimate reasons why a person cannot be relocated to Charlottetown: jobs, support networks, child care are just a few that I could name.

We already know the need in Summerside is outpacing the amount of new units planned, so we need options. There's a lot of the province that isn't in Charlottetown.

### **Expansion of program for Islanders**

Question to the minister: Will you actually be expanding this program to meet the needs of Islanders in the rest of the province as was previously announced by your department?

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

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

I appreciate the hon. members question. Being from the western part of PEI, yes, I appreciate that we need services right in our communities and when I say services, certainly right across the board, whether its shelters what have you. I would be more than happy to sit down with the hon. member to have a further discussion on this and if at all possible, that is something that as we move forward as a department, as the minister of this department, I would certainly be prepared to entertain and, again, to meet with, have discussions with the hon. member on.

Thank you.

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

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

Research has shown that students from a lower-socio economic background are less likely to attend university. Only 47.1% of youth from families in the lowest-after-tax income quartile attend a post-secondary institution as compared to 78.7% for the highest quartile.

### **Supports for low-income post-secondary students**

Question to the Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning: How will your government support post-secondary students from low and middle income households?

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Sorry, can you repeat the question, please?

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

**Ms. Bernard:** I won't repeat all the stats, but how will your government support post-secondary students from low and middle income households?

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

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

We heard about the George Coles and how that's a big help to Island students –

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Trivers:** – and it is a big help, people are very grateful to get the George Coles Bursary and it's helping a lot.

But, there's also an Island advantage portion that allows those with lower incomes to get topped up to help them and in fact, they can even be topped up to the point where they can get their tuition paid fully.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Yes, we did hear that announcement yesterday where the George Coles Bursary was upped to \$3,000, so it's currently only available to students pursuing their first post-secondary program. It offers the same amount to all students regardless of socio-economics.

That means a student living in absolute poverty receives the same amount as a student who is in post-secondary studies on a full scholarship or a student who was born

into a wealthy family. In some cases, this bursary is giving money to people who simply do not need it.

**Creation of program specific to low-income students**

Question to the hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning: Will you commit to creating a program specifically for low-income students wanting to further their education through post-secondary studies?

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

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

My understanding – and I will look into this just to be sure I've got this right, but the Island Advantage Bursary is exactly that program of which the member across is speaking, because it looks at low income and allows to top them up.

Now, the point is well taken that the George Coles is across the board and meeting with the UPEI Student Union, this is a concern that they have had as well and I would like to work with the member across to address that, but hopefully the member has looked into the Island Advantage Bursary as well.

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

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

I have looked into that.

As we all know, we are currently experiencing a housing crisis on PEI. We have a large number of our population living in poverty and our climate is warming at an alarming rate. The skills of innovation and creativity and resourcefulness are more important than ever as we look for solutions to these ongoing problems.

At UPEI, we have graduate students doing phenomenal work. For example, Jordan Sampson, Dawson MacIsaac and Brett McDermott, who invented the self-turning cage for oysters in response to a problem given to them to be solved by Prince Edward Aqua Farms.

While there is some funding provided to students in the vet college at UPEI, Prince Edward Island is the only province in Canada that does not provide funding for graduate students doing groundbreaking, innovative research.

**Supports for student research and innovation**

Question to the minister: What is your government going to do to ensure we support the innovation and potential of graduate research?

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

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

Indeed, we do have some fantastic students and some real leaders in our province. Jordan Sampson is a constituent of mine and I know his parents well and he has really brought that school of sustainable design engineering to the limelight and the rest of Canada.

I would love to have some conversations with the member on this. I have to admit that this is not an issue that has been raised to me or within my department, that I'm aware.

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

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

Home care services are essential for many patients to recover from illness, stay healthy and generally maintain a high quality of life. These patients are individuals who are unable to go to the hospital or a medical centre for treatment, either due to physical limitations or barriers to transportation access.

After surgery or due to ongoing health issues, many home care patients require regular dressing changes that require specific bandages and supplies to complete.

**Home care supplies for at-home patients**

A question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Are bandages, gauze, saline and other supplies needed for home care patients

provided for all home care patients across the 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 this question. It is a very important topic.

We talk continually about how best to treat Islanders and of course, hospital stays are becoming less long and we know for fact the research tells us, that people can heal better, can recuperate better and in a lot of cases, when they're in their own homes.

We have actually tested a pilot project with the mobile care integrated health program, where we do have health care professionals that's go out to homes to provide these services. I don't have the exact list of all of the different products that are supplied, but I'd be more than happy to get that full list and bring it back tomorrow.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

In hospitals medical supplies such as MePilex bandages and other supplies used for wound care are paid for on and provided on-site at no cost to the patient. However, when inquiring as to whether these supplies are covered for home care patients, I have heard that some home care patients must pay for supplies out-of-pocket and this seems to differ based on the community you live in.

### **Home care patients and payment of supplies**

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Are some home care patients required to pay for their own wound care supplies and if so, which patients and which supplies?

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

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

Again, when we have medical professionals such as EMT's or RN's going out to homes to help provide this essential service, certainly medical supplies are provided.

Again, I will bring back the complete list of all these supplies that are provided but if the hon. member has any specifics and she would like to share them with me, pertaining to a particular case or an Islander – obviously we're not going to share names here in the Legislative Assembly – but if you'd like to have a sidebar afterwards and share that information with me, I'll certainly look into it and address any outstanding issues.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

This is an issue that has been brought to my attention on a few different levels, both from people receiving care as well as those giving the care and the more I looked into it, the more mystery has sort of seemed to arise as to who was receiving what and when, and as I mentioned there might be some difference between communities, so I do appreciate the ministers willingness to look into this.

Home care patients, some of them must not only pay for their own supplies, but they also must locate and purchase these supplied independently. This can result in home care nurses being unable to provide appropriate and timely treatment and can also lead to additional costs for patients and long term costs for our health care system.

### **Coverage of medical supplies for home care patients**

A question to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness: In order to ensure that all Islanders are able to access timely, appropriate and effective treatment, including the most vulnerable Islanders, will your department commit to covering medical supplies for all home care patients?

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

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

In fact, this program that we're discussing here today, there was federal money that was provided to the province to roll out the MIH and I'm very happy and I'm very proud of the services that have been provided to date.

Many health care issues come with different complexities. It's impossible for me to stand here today as the Minister of Health and Wellness, to say that every single product will be covered.

Again, each individual, each health issue is a separate case. Again, if the member has any specifics that she would like to discuss with me, so that I can investigate it, I would be more than happy to have a sidebar so that I can look into the situation.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

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

With your indulgences before I ask the question, could I please toast ADL with chocolate milk for the wonderful job they do.

Thank you Mr. Speaker, thank you ADL.

Today my question is to the Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture. Our province has had a string of four straight record tourism years. Lots of work has been done by the previous administration to build and maintain incredible momentum we've seen in the last number of years.

The PC platform makes over 120 promises, of which one is to establish a tourism development fund. The platform commits \$300,000 towards the fund.

**Establishment of a tourism development fund**

Minister, will you be consulting with the industry before this fund is established?

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

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

Thank you, hon. member for the question.

Yes, tourism has been on a boom here the last three-four years. It's phenomenal what we're seeing happening on PEI and we're looking to expand it and take it to the next level.

Yes, I've already started consultations. We've had our first meeting with TIAPEI. We've also met with the new tourism board.

We're going to, very aggressively, after this session is out and into the fall, start discussions, and yes, certainly we're open to ideas. A lot of the tourism operators feel like they haven't been listened to, and we really need to start listening to them and expand on their ideas and working together.

Thank you, member.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

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

Mr. Minister, as you indicated you will be consulting groups, so you'll be consulting more people in the tourism trade than, in either the Cavendish and Charlottetown area as you indicated.

Would the minister be consulting organizations like the L' Association Touristique d'Évangéline? Will they be consulted in this fund?

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

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

Thank you, member, and certainly if they would like to be consulted we can do that as well as all Island tourism operators. The more open to discussion, the better.

The department is looking forward; there's been some good discussion so far. Like I say, over the summer and into the fall, we're going to be very aggressively looking into this. So certainly anyone that's interested can feel free to reach out to our department.

Thank you, member.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche your second supplementary.

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

As a concept, it would appear the establishment of the tourism product development fund has great merit.

### **Timeline for tourism development fund**

Minister: Will this fund be up and running before the tourism season begins next year?

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

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

Thank you, member.

I'm certainly going to push for that. Obviously, things are happening now; the open discussions have already started. The problem we're in right now is that tourism season has started, so to get a lot of the stakeholders to the table right now is going to be a challenge. But as soon as the season's over with, we will be starting this and very aggressively looking into it.

So I'm looking forward to it, and I'll do my very best to have it ready for next year.

Thank you, member.

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

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

My question today is for the Minister of Social Development and Housing. The PC Party in the recent election promised to, and I'll quote once again: "launch a PEI mobile rental voucher program."

As the minister knows and acknowledges, there is a serious problem with housing on Prince Edward Island. I know many people who are anxiously waiting for this \$4.8 million program to begin.

### **Launch of PEI mobile rental voucher program**

Minister: Could you provide the House with an explanation of just exactly how this program would work?

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

**Mr. Hudson:** Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I do thank the hon. member for the question.

Certainly, there's a lot of great initiatives that were in our platform, and this was one of them. Are they going to all be realized within the first few months or the first year? No.

But with that, once my department – the great staff in my department are working on this as far as how it will be rolled out.

I just end up by saying that at the end of the day, we want to make sure that we get this right. Because as the hon. member stated, we have a housing situation, we have challenges there, and we do need to get these initiatives correct.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The PC Party indicates 1,300 Island families and seniors currently on the provincial waiting list are waiting. Students would also be eligible for this program as a few other questioners asked today.

As the minister said recently: the Island's housing situation is in crisis.

Will this program begin this summer to address the crisis identified by this minister today in Question Period and in earlier Question Periods?

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

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

I guess to reiterate again, anytime that one family, one individual do not have a roof over their heads, yes it's a crisis for that family or for that individual.

Look at the rental supplement program that the hon. member's government did bring in. Great program and great staff that administered that program. We need to build on that and the rent supplement program – it's going to provide a great foundation for us to move forward on.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The PC platform costs the program at just over \$4.8 million and the commitment was greeted very warmly by residents in my community. In fact, I've heard from Islanders who supported your party specifically because of this very very commitment.

#### **Cost of program to government**

Minister, will this be an annual ongoing cost to government and will it be in the 2019-2020 budget?

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

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

I'm very pleased to hear that the hon. member say that aspects of our platform were warmly received. I'll have to say that when I was on the campaign trail that yes, our platform, it was very warmly received.

To go back to what I said in response to the hon. members first question, are these platform commitments all going to come about overnight within the first few months what have you, no they're not.

With that though, yes we need to get it right. The hon. member has great experience in government in rolling out of programs.

And I'll just say, I would love to sit down with him at some point, see what his suggestions, what his initiatives may be and we could sit down over a coffee – even better, let's sit down over a glass of ADL chocolate milk.

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

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

**An Hon. Member:** Here we go

**Mr. Deagle:** Here we go, yeah.

**An Hon. Member:** Here we go.

**Mr. Deagle:** Here's the good ones.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday I had the opportunity to meet with a constituent of mine Brooks Roche who lives with type 1 diabetes.

Type 1 diabetes impacts a wide range of Islanders from all ages. In the past, it has been referred to as juvenile diabetes, but four out of five people diagnosed with type 1 diabetes are actually adults.

#### **Islanders living with type 1 diabetes**

Question to the health minister: Do we have a sense of how many Islanders are currently living with type 1 diabetes?

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

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

We certainly do have those stats, I don't have them currently here with me today, but I'd be more than happy to bring them back tomorrow.

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

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

For people with type 1 diabetes, the use of an insulin pump is vital to helping manage their condition. Currently the province covers the cost of insulin pumps for Islanders under 25 years of age.

### **Cost of insulin pump**

Question to the health minister: Roughly how much does it cost to equip a patient with an insulin pump?

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

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

Currently the cost is approximately \$6,300. I'm looking forward to getting on the floor with my budget to discuss some great initiatives that my department is coming forward with to support individuals that do have diabetes. Until we get to my budget, unfortunately I can't announce those here at this time, but I'm proud to sort of give a glimmer of hope that people are going to be very pleased with the announcement.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Use of an insulin pump is proven more effective in managing conditions than injecting yourself several times a day as many people living with diabetes must do.

Better management of conditions and symptoms leads to lower health costs, fewer emergency room visits and long-term complications.

### **Coverage of insulin pumps to all Islanders**

Question to the health minister: Will your department work towards covering the cost of insulin pumps for Islanders of all ages, and not just those under 25?

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

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

As a new government here on Prince Edward Island, obviously we're listening to the concerns of Islanders and while the time I spent in opposition, seven of the eight years I was the health critic, I certainly had many opportunities to sit down with Jake Reid from the Diabetes Association of Canada. Matter of fact, I'm meeting with Jake, I believe it's next week – and that's one of the measures that they're obviously advocating for very strongly.

While I can't commit to that today, it's something that our government will seriously take into consideration.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I just have to return briefly to something that was said by the Minister of Health and Wellness regarding supplies for home care patients.

This might not be an exact quote but he said something along the lines of: we have to look at individual cases and individual needs.

I just want to point out the overwhelming majority of patients receiving in-home treatment for wound care are seniors. Many face issues with mobility or lack of access to reliable and affordable transportation. Many are on a fixed income and regularly struggle to make ends meet.

I want to also highlight that those who are able, so those who don't face any barriers to traveling to a health care centre or a hospital to receive their wound care treatment are able to have all of their supplies covered.

### **Quality of care for patients**

A question to the minister: Should home care patients receive the same quality of care as those who have the means and ability to travel to a hospital for treatment?

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

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

What I said, and the hon. member is mostly correct on that, is I said I will look into the situation, I'll look into what's provided and what's not provided and ill bring that back.

Just over the last two days I've been dealing with one of my own constituent's who's mother was released from hospital, they want to care for her obviously in their home and they went to try to get a bed, a proper hospital bed and unfortunately, there's a six to eight week waitlist right now to order a new one, so they purchased a refurbished one. Unfortunately, after 48 hours the bed had a malfunction and it's not currently in a useable state.

So I'm working closely with that individual right now to try and source something, whether it's through the Red Cross program or if there's a program through Health PEI that we can find a suitable bed for her to use but as I said, every issue, every health care situation has its different complexities.

Whether its supplies, whether its drugs and those are all situations that individually we need to look at. As a government, within our thrown speech, from the front cover to the back cover it reads a common thread all the way though, caring for people and that's what this government is committed to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

We are all aware of the strain placed on our healthcare system s our population ages.

We heard in the budget address that we will see a new orthopedic specialist to alleviate the growing wait times for hip and knee replacements. This is welcome news as the current waitlist is approximately two years long.

**New orthopedic specialist**

A question to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness: When can we expect the new orthopedic specialist to start seeing patients?

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

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

We do have a currently orthopedic surgeon who just finished his residency; he's actually been here a few times as a locum and has actually been performing surgery.

I'm happy to announce that my deputy minister met with this individual last week. Made an initial offer, there was some complexities with this surgeon coming because his partner is also a medical professional, so we're trying to match that up to see if we can get both of those individuals who are and would be repatriated Islanders, which is a win-win, right?

But right now, we're looking at potentially September, having a brand new orthopedic surgeon in place working here on Prince Edward Island.

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

**Ms. Beaton:** That's great news.

There has been a lot of focus on orthopedics and rightfully so, there are other areas that have incredible wartimes within our healthcare system.

Last July, it was reported the wait time for cataract surgery, for corrective eye surgery was 316 days.

**Current wait times for Islanders in need of eye surgery**

A question to the minister: What is the current wait time for Islanders in need of eye surgery?

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

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

Again, that's information I'll have to bring back.

I just want to go back to the orthopedic side of it again, too, for a moment. I had the great pleasure last weekend of meeting with the Canadian Physiotherapy Association. They had a national conference here and what they're doing is advocating for more emphasis, not more emphasis but additional emphasis put on physiotherapy so that in many cases you don't have to go forward to have a hip or knee replacement when possibly physiotherapy can match that.

But with regards to the cataract surgery, yes, I'm troubled that the wait time has been quite long. It's been a building number for the last number of years, we're working hard to reduce that and I will bring back the exact data on that tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

It was reported that health PEI was studying what the ophthalmologist requirements for PEI was.

A question to the minister: Is there a need for any additional ophthalmologist on PEI and if so, what is the government doing to recruit them?

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

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

Well, right now we are still conducting that research and we're doing everything that we can to reduce the wait times. If we discover that another specialist is required to come here to PEI, then we will go through the proper procedures and we'll direct retention and recruitment to start that process right away. But until we have the full review done, we can't do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I heard from multiple constituents that it is now a 24-26-month period before they'll be able to get their corrective eye surgery.

#### **Wait times for corrective eye surgery**

Question for the minister: Do you think 24-26 months for seniors to get their vision corrected is acceptable?

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

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

No, I do not.

I think it's deplorable, to be honest, and one of the measures that we've put in place, and the previous government did it as well, is to try to eliminate some of that backlog, is we have brought locums in and that's another measure that we're looking at doing, until we have the full determination whether or not we need to recruit another fulltime professional to provide this service.

Locums can provide that as well, but as we get there, we'll make that decision.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I would suggest that an increase in the last – less than a year, 316 days to over 24 months, would be kind of evidence enough that we need to do something and need to do it right away.

In the throne speech it states: Our seniors should never feel alone or unsafe.

Waiting over two years for corrective eye surgery seems contrary to that statement. There are real consequences to seniors, including threatening their ability to maintain their drivers' license.

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: What is this government's plan to resolve the unacceptable wait times for our Island seniors needing eye surgery?

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

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

Again, I'll repeat, what we're doing is an internal review right now to see why the wait time is to the degree that it's at. Again, as I said before, I think it's deplorable that Islanders have to wait that length of time.

My parents themselves, seniors, they had to go through this process. I talked to seniors all the time on the doorsteps during the last election and this is something that I want to solve and something that will be solved.

In the measures that we're looking at is bringing locums in, which can help alleviate some of this wait time. This is an important file and we're doing the necessary work on it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Previous governments have had many opportunities, including Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, to partner with the federal government to establish a provincial museum. Islanders have continued to ask political leaders, including during this past election, to support this important undertaking and look for any opportunity to make their dream of a provincial museum a reality.

### **Options to establish a provincial museum**

A question to the Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture: Will your government commit to exploring potential options towards the establishment of a provincial museum?

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

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

Thank you, hon. member.

That conversation has already started in my department about three weeks ago. I met down with the appropriate staff to find out where it was and with the previous administration, how far they've taken it.

What I did find out along the line is it seemed to grow some legs and then it hit a wall. Grow some legs, hit a wall. We've got artifacts, history, the pride of PEI in a warehouse somewhere and it's a shame and I think it needs to be looked at.

Our government is going to look at it and continue to look at it. We're doing research on it right now. I have no timeframe of when it will be back, but we're doing our best to see what we can find out.

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