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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

THURSDAY, 4 JULY 2019



Responses to Question Taken as Notice

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

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

Yesterday the member from Montague-Kilmuir asked how many Islanders have type 1 diabetes. As of March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019 there were 509 Islanders with type 1 diabetes, including 130 children and 379 adults. I'd also like to add that our provincial diabetes program supports Islanders of all ages and our insulin pump program is for children and youth under the age of 19, not 25 as quoted by the hon. member.

I'd also like to note that we are currently working on renewing our diabetes strategy for the province and we hope to have that great release taking place early this fall.

Also, the member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke was asking about medical supplies provided through home care. On average, home care support 2100 clients each month, including those with acute, chronic, palliative or rehabilitated needs.

In relation to the medical supplies such as dressings, bandages, gauze and saline, home care provides all of patients with two weeks of free medical supplies post-hospital discharge and that can be supplied by any hospital in-province or out of province. After the two week period, patients are required to provide their own supplies. Home care staff work closely with patients to determine if they have health coverage or insurance that could support additional supplies and that is if the need is long term.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Yesterday the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot asked me how many of the affordable housing units planned for Summerside were already spoken for.

I've gone back to my department to confirm that all new provincially funded affordable housing units are filled using the housing registry. This means that residents for the 32 seniors and 30 family units under development for Summerside will come from the housing registry. The registry is not first-come first-serve, but is based on who is in the greatest need.

As well, I made a commitment to bring back information about a temporary shelter for Summerside. Our department is currently working to complete a temporary housing community needs assessment, to better understand and address temporary housing and its underlying causes.

We are working in collaboration with community partners, such as the John Howard Society, Blooming House, Lennon Recovery House, Canadian Mental Health Association, Bedford MacDonald House and the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI on this work.

The community needs assessment will help identify service gaps and help shape future policy direction.

We will share those findings and recommendations with the community and with this Legislature when it is complete. We anticipate the report to be finalized later this summer.

This year, we have increased funding to Bedford Macdonald House, which has allowed them to expand their programming. We have also partnered with Blooming House for a pilot shelter for women. While we complete the community needs assessment, we have extended our pilot with Blooming House.

As well, the budget that the hon. Minister of Finance presented last week commits \$100,000 annually to support a shelter for women in this province.

Before I sit down, I would also like to correct some information that was provided to the Legislature yesterday. The hon. member stated there were no temporary shelter services outside Charlottetown.

Chief Mary Bernard Memorial Women's Shelter in Lennox Island welcomes both

Indigenous and non-Indigenous families and provides transport to and from the shelter, and other services.

As well, the member referred to our toll-free shelter line as an 'emergency shelter line for Charlottetown'. The shelter line supports all of Prince Edward Island and continues to do so.

If there are Islanders in critical need of temporary housing support, whether they live in Tignish, Summerside, Charlottetown, Montague, Souris or somewhere in between, I would encourage them to call the toll-free number 1-833-340-4722.

In closing, I would like to thank the hon. member for bringing this forward and I do look forward to working with the member on this file.

Thank you.

**Mr. Myers:** Good job.

#### Questions by Members

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

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

Again, I need to express my gratitude for the prompt and the very complete responses that we received today, as we seem to receive every day. It's very much appreciated.

Every day I drive from Hampton into town and I pass the Cornwall Perimeter Highway project. I've watched the progress of the bypass of numerous, large machines pecking and scraping at the Earth to produce a road carved out, at least in part, of productive farmland.

I'm taken back to the debates that we had during the previous sessions of this House on the appropriateness of public spending on this project, in particular, and of the consequent reduction in money available to look after our existing highways generally.

The current minister has said in this House that this year the condition of the roads is worse than ever.

#### **Extra dollars for road upgrades**

A question to the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: Will there be more money available this year to maintain our existing roads given the unprecedented problems that he has cited in this House?

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

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

The Leader of the Opposition brings up a really good issue here. It's one that's near and dear to my heart living in rural Prince Edward Island and, in particular, a district that has really rough roads.

We talked about, during my budget estimates, that there has been doubling of the gas tax. It's a one-time initiative by the federal government. A lot of that gas tax money we use directly for roads if they're inside a municipality. We do have some extra money to bring the roads up to snuff this year.

We're looking at our capital plan. We're looking where the needs are. We're looking where the most people are and we're looking at some of the things like our industrial corridor that goes into Georgetown that's a very important, vital link to the industrial part of Kings County – that we make all of our steps to increase the amount of paving that we do.

At this point, I can't give you an exact number of kilometres, but it's definitely something that's top of my priorities.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

While the Cornwall bypass is clearly close to completion, I'm wondering what future plans this government has – this new government has – when it comes to spending priorities on our roads, something that affects, of course, all Islanders whether your live in the country or the city.

Transportation is one area where technology and the response to climate change will create profound and rapid changes. Electrification, autonomous vehicles, car-sharing applications, and probably many more yet unimagined advances are destined to have a large and profound impact on both the number and the nature of future cars on our highways.

### **Data on future traffic trends**

To the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: What data are your department using on future traffic trends as you develop your priorities when it comes to road construction and maintenance on PEI and the years ahead?

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

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

We would have all kinds of different data that we would use when it came to building roads. A lot of our biggest concerns that we have right now was where the traffic count is going to increase substantially, particularly in intersections.

We look over by the St. Peters Rd., that intersection, how watch traffic has increased in the last 10 years and the last 20 years and so on and we know how much it's going to increase over the next 10 years and over the next 20 years and it's quite substantial. We're looking at some of those trends while we're trying to get our plan in place.

But a couple things, because you did have a couple of different big things in there that you talked about, what the priorities are. Priorities, and my priorities has always been to fix up the roads in rural Prince Edward Island because I think it's very important that we enable people to continue to live there, that it's important to me that we show people in rural Prince Edward Island that we care as much about them as we do to the people who travel on the highways,

Also, when we talk about the perimeter highway, I had a chance to tour the perimeter highway the other day. I was critical of the amount that was spent there. I've got to give credit the Member from Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank and

some of the initiatives that he has in and around that area that leads into Cornwall that's really going to put Cornwall on the map on some of the industrial ideas that they have and how the town is looking to grow and build once that additional traffic is taken out and they're able to make a downtown and a main street.

At the end of the day, I think there's some real positives for the Town of Cornwall and I commend him for the great work that they've done with the opportunity they've been given. As you know, not every community would take that opportunity to grow and build their own town and I'll tell you, Cornwall's booming.

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

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

Many contracts, of course, were rewarded for the Cornwall bypass project and I know that the current minister, as he just said, was less than impressed by how that process was carried out and ultimately how some of the contracts were awarded.

### **Tenders for Cornwall bypass**

Question to the minister: Are there any further tenders related to the Cornwall bypass to be awarded, and if so, what will you do differently from the previous administration?

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

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

So I think the last round of – if I'm wrong I'll come back to the House tomorrow with the answer, but my understanding according to my notes here is the last round of tenders went out in February and that everything is awarded moving forward and that we're on track to have the whole project open by this fall.

As far as what I would do different, I don't anticipate during my tenure here having to do a project of that size. As I talked about earlier, I have a very big interest in some of

the rural roads, in rehabilitating the roads in rural Prince Edward Island.

I think that they've been forgotten some over the years and my priority is going to put rural Islanders first and put those roads that are the vital links that are going to take us to cities so that the people can come and spend their hard earned dollars in the capital areas of their respective parts of Prince Edward Island.

As always, we will do a tendering process and lowest bidder will win the award.

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

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

I've spoken repeatedly in this House about my preference for spending on our roads to be predominantly targeted to maintaining the condition of the already existing roads that we have. After all, we are the province with, by far, the greatest kilometer of distance of roads per resident – that fact along with the fact that the substrate in which we build our roads and the rough weather that we have here, creates that sort of major ongoing cost for the department.

Many of your current caucus have expressed similar concerns to mine in the last session about the condition of our roads and the inadequate amount of money that we dedicate to maintaining our already existing stock.

To the same minister: You've already sort of alluded to this but I want to make sure that I heard you right.

#### **Emphasis on maintaining existing roads**

Will we see a shift in emphasis now that you're the minister to increase spending on maintenance of the roads we already have, rather than building more new roads?

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

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

That's exactly what I intend to do. As you know, I inherited a portfolio where there was a five-year capital plan where there was

an agreement with the federal government where a lot of the projects that are currently books have already been approved by Ottawa. We're looking at how we can ramp up some of those and get some of the more problem areas dealt with right away but it is the maintenance of the current roads that is the most important issue to me.

I can't speak for the perimeter highway and what the idea was at the time, that's before my time. But I can say during my stay in that office my intentions are to focus my efforts on the existing infrastructure, bring them up to the grade that they need to be because I believe it's high time that some people got decent roads to drive on in rural PEI.

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

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

I have to say that's one of the most satisfying answers I've ever had in this House.

Thank you, minister.

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

**Mr. Myers:** You didn't think it was going to be me either.

**Leader of the Opposition:** You're right.

Whether the roads are being repaired or repaved or created anew, they all need asphalt. We recently opened up the plants here on the Island. A new asphalt plant has been proposed for the West Royalty region of Charlottetown on the Sherwood Road.

Local residents, as I mentioned earlier in my opening statements, have raised concerns about the location of that plant which is really in the midst of a residential area.

A couple of hours ago, I attended a rally at City Hall along with members of this side of the House. About 40 other people showed up to express their concerns over this proposed plant.

Although the zoning, of course, for the plant is a municipal affair, the project has to be

subject to an environmental assessment by the province before it goes ahead.

**Environmental assessment re: asphalt plant**

A question to the Minister of Environment, Water and Climate Change: What factors will you be taking into account when you make that environmental assessment?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment, Water and Climate Change.

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

That is a great question. I, too, have been contacted by many individuals who are very concerned about an asphalt plant in that area.

Really, when you look at it, the department relies on guidelines for asphalt plants for setbacks, primarily. It is a guideline from 1985 that has not really been updated lately.

It states: that no person shall build or install an asphalt plant in any territory zoned for residential, commercial, or parks and recreational use within 500 metres of such a territory. The asphalt plant and the loading and unloading and discharge areas of aggregate stockpiles shall be at a minimum distance of 500 metres from any dwelling and 100 metres from any watercourse.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

In the recent budget address and associated documentation provided online, there was specific mention of active transportation corridors.

To quote: “Islanders are encouraged to opt for new ways of travel to reduce the number of passenger vehicles on our roads. Additional funding will be provided for Pat and the Elephant and Transportation West.”

These specific organizations referenced both provide accessible transportation services to people with disabilities, seniors, and others with mobility challenges.

Neither of these organizations have any idea of what the budget announcement may mean to them as they haven’t been consulted or contacted. They heard this for the first time on budget day, and there are no new commitments in the tabled budget or supporting documentation.

**Funding for two organizations**

Question to the Minister of Social Development and Housing: Could you provide any insight into the funding that will be provided to Pat and the Elephant and Transportation West?

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

**Mr. Hudson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and thanks to the hon. member for bringing this forward.

Certainly, our department works and will continue to work with NGOs. There’s 30 NGOs that we work with, which includes Transportation West, Pat and the Elephant, and a number of others.

With regard to the specific question, I guess first of all I would have to say, up until the budget is actually made public that we cannot divulge the information that is being put forward in that budget as far as funding to any individual, any NGO, or individual organization group.

With regard to the specific question though, I will, hon. member, take it under notice and bring back complete details tomorrow.

Thank you.

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

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

I would note that these documents have been in public for a couple of weeks now, and that there has been a publication made online with a highlight from the budget specifically highlighting these funding commitments which do not appear in the documentation provided.

Question to the Minister of Social Development and Housing: Will you honour

the public commitment that has been made in the budget address and those communications to provide that increased funding to these two essential and worthy organizations?

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

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

Any commitment that our department does make will absolutely be honoured.

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

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

That is also an awesome answer.

Returning to the statement, Islanders are encouraged to opt for new ways of travel to reduce the number of passenger vehicles on our roads.

#### **Transportation re: people with mobility challenges**

A question to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: Could you provide further insight into how investment into transportation for people with mobility challenges, who otherwise cannot travel, will reduce the number of passenger vehicles on our roads?

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

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

So as I talked about different times in this House, probably two or three times so far, we have a sustainable transportation committee here in the province. There's people from my department that are on it, there's people from the minister of environments department that are on it. What we're bringing forward is the sustainable transportation strategy.

We expect it's going to be out this summer, it's going to cover off some of those things as, how do we help make people move around the province in a sustainable fashion and how do we move people around more

on mass than they do now when everybody takes their own car.

So how Pat and the Elephant exactly does it, I guess, its currently already doing it. There's probably no change that's going to contribute towards that but we do have a bigger plan and we hope to unveil it this summer and I think it's really good and the briefing I've had on it so far, I'm kind of excited about it and I think everybody will be.

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

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

Yesterday during debate on budget estimates, the minister responsible for climate change said something that I found surprising. He said that his department advised him that the costs associated with the target changes my bill is promoting, would be, "Very expensive."

#### **Cost associated with target changes**

A question to the Minister Responsible for Climate Change: Minister, knowing how much I value evidence, could you offer me some clarity on how your department came to this conclusion?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment, Water and Climate Change.

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

So what they did, was they looked at the reduction of CO2 equivalent emissions that would be required to get to a target like that's being proposed by the member from Summerside-Wilmot and they said ok, what kind of actions can we take in order to hit that target?

They made a various number of assumptions, for example, about the amount of funding in the Federal government might be able to provide. Looking at the number of vehicles on the road and they did their best to come up with cost estimates based on that data. I do hope to maybe have a version of that data that I can share with the member sometime soon.

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

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

As I've pointed out many times in the Legislature, there are multitudes of ways that we could reach any emission reduction target. In fact, the Premier and I have had several discussions on that. Each option would have a different cost associated with it and I've spent the better part of three hours advocating for us to choose the most cost-effective option at our disposal to reach my proposed target.

### **Carbon reduction mechanisms**

A question to the same minister: Minister, which carbon reduction mechanisms did your department use in the models that they presented to you when advising you that the cost of meeting this target was too high?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment, Water and Climate Change.

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

Primarily what they did was take what we have as the status quo policy on carbon pricing, which I've stated that I don't really believe helps reduce CO2 emissions really at all. So they assumed that would be in place and so they were looking primarily at really taking our transportation that uses fuel and switching that into something that doesn't emit CO2 emissions, like electric vehicles. That was the primary mechanism.

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

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

Using electric vehicles is certainly one way to lower emissions but it's certainly not the only one, so I find it very concerning for the minister to stand up in the House and say that the only way we could move forward would be very expensive.

The minister went on to say that these experts could explain to us what a 1.2 target means and provide us with a full picture before we go changing the targets.

A question to the minister responsible for climate change: Minister were you also briefed on the overall costs associated with not meeting a global target of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment, Water and Climate Change.

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

As the member across knows, we've had a very lively debate about this very issue, while debating her amendment to the *Climate Leadership Act*.

One of the things I've been advocating for is a standing committee discussion of this very topic so we can get out all those costs. The department is in the midst of trying to put those parameters together and I just wanted to say, in the spirit of collaboration that's what we're doing. I'm listening to the member across, the department is listening.

We want to make sure we get all those costs on the table and we do a thorough job of that before we make any changes in target and understand exactly what that's going to mean to Islanders; look at all the different mechanisms, look at every option available. The analysis done so far has been done very quickly and I look forward to the member sending her bill to standing committee so we can continue to discuss it there.

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

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

Our Premier has agreed with me many times on the need to reach carbon neutrality by 2050, but we are currently not on pace to meet that goal.

The minister has made some very bold statements in asserting that the experts in his department are advising him that meeting climate targets set out by the IPCC report are very expensive and indeed seem to be cautioning him against it, when a discussion around all the possible options at our disposal hasn't even taken place yet.

As the minister for this portfolio, when comments like this are made, they will be

seen by your caucus to carry weight on a very important topic.

**IPCC report targets ‘expensive’**

Question to the minister: Minister, will you table those calculations that you have so much faith in so this House can assess the fulsome nature of what you are using to base your decisions on?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment, Water and Climate Change.

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

Let’s be very clear on this fact. I speak on behalf of the experts in my department, they are extremely dedicated to addressing climate change, to meeting the targets that are set out and that is not the intention at all in my statements and if it was implied that that is not what they were doing, that is completely incorrect and absolute falsehood.

This department is working diligently to make sure we address climate change and they’ve made great strides in doing that as well with the current plan in place and that’s what they will continue to do and in terms of their calculations – my reluctance to release them is, these are a work in progress, they’re making all kinds of assumptions and the reason I’m willing to release them is exactly this kind of line of questioning will come about.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

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

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

Question for the Premier: As everyone in this House knows there is an energetic debate taking place over a piece of legislation, historical legislation, designed to strengthen our province’s response to climate change.

On Tuesday, the Premier said the following, and I quote: I can’t speak for the rest of my colleagues but I’m going to have a hard time not supporting this.

**Premier support of Bill No. 102**

Given the premier’s statement, will he be supporting Bill No. 102 and when it comes to a vote?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

It has been a very spirited debate and what I said to the hon. member who brought it forward, and we have talked about it many times, I think the ultimate goal for everybody in this Legislature ought to be and should be and must be carbon neutrality. So how we get there is what we are really debating and what we are debating in the particular bill was the reduction to go from 1.4 to 1.2.

I don’t think anybody was debating whether or not we believe in the science. I don’t think anyone was debating whether or not we support these measures. We are actually debating changing or moving the target and what I said, and I’m very proud to have said, and I’m glad that the media picked it up is that I think it’s incumbent upon all of us to have an open mind and look toward this with the ultimate goal trying to get to carbon neutrality.

I think would be very neglecting in our duties if we didn’t have that goal in mind as we move forward.

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

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

Next week my understanding the premier will be in Saskatoon and scheduled to meet with fellow Premiers. We know not too long ago Premier Kenny was here and we know Premier Kenney was advocating on his behalf for litigation in his province, and now we know that it has been defeated in two other provinces.

**Supporting stronger emission targets**

So will our Premier be telling his colleagues, and most specifically Premiers Kenney, Moe and Ford he will be supporting stronger emission targets and will he lobby them to do the same?

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

**Premier King:** Mr. Speaker, my position on this has been consistent from the very beginning.

I believe that it's incumbent upon all Islanders particularly those in the positions that we are in move this province towards carbon neutrality. As an island province more mindful than most of the changing climate and the impacts it has on here.

In terms of my colleagues, as the hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank would know, the council of the federation is a diverse crew. There's very differing opinions, each individual premier is responsible to support what they believe their province wants and needs and I can tell this Legislature that when the discussion comes up with any of those three individuals that he mentioned, whether it's the prime minister when I meet with him on the way to Saskatoon, I will be telling them what Islanders want.

Islanders want us to work towards carbon neutrality. They want us to do it responsibly in a common sense way and my opinion on that will never change.

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

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

Premier, I certainly hope that there will be no influence from the Kenny or Ford camps because they seem to be doing a pretty good job of influencing some parts of our country, including, Blaine Higgs in New Brunswick.

In late June, the province filed a notice of intervention with the Supreme Court of Canada over our province's intention to take part in a case launch by Saskatchewan in that province's fight against anti-pollution measures.

### **Anti-pollution measures and Supreme Court**

Will the Premier tell the House the substance of that intervention?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Mr. Speaker, essentially what happens is when a court case goes on like this, we file to be part of an intervention so we can see whatever the fallout of that court case would be that we could have some type of participation if need be.

This is an issue that we're all very mindful of; we're all very concerned about. As you know, when the new government was sworn in I told all of those who asked that we would not be joining the fight. I don't believe this is a fight we need to have. I want to have a discussion with the other premiers. I want to have a discussion with the prime minister and all of those in this House to find out what we can do in a reasonable, common sense way to get to the goals we need to get to and that's exactly what we're doing.

In this particular case, we're just reserving the right to participate if we need to at some point after the decision is brought down, but in no way shape or form should anyone suggest that we are joining that because we're absolutely not.

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

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

In response to a recent question in this very Legislature on EI zones, the Premier stated he supported one zone for PEI provided it was at the lower rate of the two zones.

### **EI benefits and an EI zone**

Question to the Premier: Could you explain to this House how the number of work hours required to qualify for EI benefits are determined in an EI zone?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member opposite would be as up-to-date as anyone on this issue, but essentially, the way the zones are broken down, I think it has to do with a number of factors in terms of what the EI rate is, what the job availability is in each region.

I believe in the rural region it's 600 and some hours – or no, sorry, in the city region it's a bigger number of hours that you need

compared to what you need in the rural. I believe that the change was made to sort of reflect what the availability of jobs are in the rural areas versus what they are in urban Prince Edward Island.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness, your first supplementary.

**Mr. Henderson:** The Premier is correct in that. Kudos for that.

The key determined for the level of unemployment of an EI zone is divided by the amount of unemployment rate by the workforce capacity. As he would be well aware, that in rural zones, like in Prince Edward Island here, specifically in the rural eastern and western ends of the province, we have seen – would cause an increase in the number of hours if we went to the one zone and that would also decrease the amount of hours required in the Charlottetown area where there are more job vacancies than there would be in a riding like O'Leary-Inverness.

Does the Premier agree with this assessment?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** I'm not quite sure of the premise of the question.

I think that you would be suggesting if we went to one zone based on the city requirements now that it would be harder for people in – yes, it would be. Absolutely, and that's why I've been advocating to all of those in the conversation we had with the three mayors that we met with who asked me to write a letter and support the letters that they would write to all political parties to suggest that we go to one zone.

I said that I would be prepared to do that providing it is the same requirement – the rural zone number that we use and not the higher one in the cities.

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

**Mr. Henderson:** The Premier is advocating for a one zone, Mr. Speaker.

In the Premier's and in the Conservative PC Party platform they advocate that they are strong voices for rural Prince Edward Island.

### **Job vacancies and letter to federal minister**

Does the Premier know how many job vacancies are advertised today on the West Prince job area on the Career Development Services website and will the Premier actually write a letter to the Federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Mr. Duclos, advocating for two zones instead of one zone?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Just so we're clear, what I would be advocating for would be fairness across the board. I wouldn't want to see anybody in rural Prince Edward Island impacted so that's why I would not want to see that number go up.

But I do not believe that having the number in Charlottetown being the same is going to impact anybody in rural Prince Edward Island.

I think a leveling of the playing field is a reasonable approach going forward, providing that what we're lobbying for is a zone that is required – that is currently what we have in place in rural Prince Edward Island, which is the 490 hours or something whatever it is.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Donagh.

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

In the PC platform, we promised to broaden the scope of practice for nurse practitioners, RNs, RCWs, LPNs, and pharmacists. The minister of health made a good announcement yesterday on the work happening with pharmacy. Obviously, we need to go much further.

### **Expanding scope of practice for health care professionals**

I'm wondering if the minister could update us on what his next steps would be on expanding scope of practice for health care professionals.

**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 that question.

Of course health care is important to all Islanders right across Prince Edward Island. As the new minister of health, seven weeks in now, I'm starting that process by having consultation with our health care professionals, whether it be the colleges and the associations.

I think that there is a better way to deliver health care on PEI, and by having those discussions with our health care professionals we will determine the best way forward.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

When I became the critic for health, I certainly learned a lot from the minister who was the previous critic and I know he's in a position now to make good progress on this. We both pushed for exactly this for a long time.

Will the minister of health please let us know exactly about that timeline? I think urgency has to be of utmost importance in this.

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

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

It's impossible for me to be here today and give a firm timeline on it. It is top of my agenda, and, as I've already noted, I've been meeting with some of the colleges and the associations.

You're right. We did make an announcement here the other day around the expanded scope for pharmacy and pharmacy

techs. Those discussions, of course, are ongoing.

Just this past weekend, I met with the National Physiotherapy Association and the provincial president as well, and we had great discussions around how physio can be integrated better into our health care system to provide preventative measures as well before Islanders' conditions may become to the acute level that they're going to need hip or knee replacement.

There's many things that we need to do to improve the delivery of health care here on PEI. I can't, as I said, give you a definitive timeline here today, but, as I said, it is top of my agenda and everybody in my department knows that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Donagh.

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

Thank you, minister. I'm glad to hear that is at the top of your priority list, as well as the department knowing that.

I know when I went door to door during the election and we talked about this expanded scope of practice and allowing our health professionals to do more, one thing that kept coming up over and over again was about recruitment and how hard it is to get certain members of these health care professional fields to PEI.

Does the minister realize and see and making it clear to his department, that if we start expanding this scope of practice, we can actually use it as a serious recruitment tool and help solve some of the issues we have around recruitment of health care professionals in this province?

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

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

Yes, recruitment is an integral part of delivery of health care here on PEI. We have a tremendous recruitment secretariat that's doing great work here on PEI. There's been

two doctors just recently added to their complement in Western PEI and I look forward to receiving updates and being able to provide other announcements as far as recruitment of health care professionals.

But it's important to note as well that besides recruitment, we also have to look at what we have here currently on PEI or what we can change here on PEI. I'm very proud that the work that was done previously in the previous administration, particularly with Kathleen Casey and her work on midwives.

I'm extremely proud as the health minister to state that we are going to finally be able to introduce midwife service here on PEI. It's coming, it took a long time to get here, but it will finally be here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

All new medications developed must first be approved by Health Canada before distribution; they must then be reviewed to decide if the drug will be eligible for public reimbursement at a Provincial level.

#### **Approval of medications by Health Canada**

A question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Are you familiar with how this review process works?

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

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

There is a committee that looks at that and will use an example with regards to cancer drugs, we have oncologists that are on that committee, we have representatives from the Canadian Cancer Society on that committee, we have all qualified health care professionals that are working on these various committees to ensure the drugs that are coming forward are the drugs that are best suited for the delivery here on Prince Edward Island.

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

**Ms. Altass:** So just to clarify then, the committees that you're talking about, those are occurring at a Provincial level to review the recommended drugs?

That's my question.

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

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

Yes, the province and we had a discussion on this last week when we had a bill on the floor with regards to the federal formulary and the provincial formulary and how we actually married those together.

So, as I said we have committees that review the drugs, we constantly review the formularies, we're all constantly talking with physicians as well, with regards to what drugs are available and what drugs might be available through the generic drug program as well. Which then can be provided at a much cheaper rate but there is a process and it's working very well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

So just to clarify, the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technology and Health Process, known as CADTH, was introduced by health ministers in 2003 to replace 18 independent review processes that existed in different jurisdictions in Canada.

This pan-Canadian process conducts thorough and objective evaluation of the clinical economic and patient evidence on drugs and uses this evaluation to provide reimbursement recommendations and advice to Canada's Federal, Provincial and Territorial public drug plan. The pan-oncology drug review functions similarly, specifically for oncology medications.

#### **Drugs not covered in PEI**

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: How many medications that are currently recommended for coverage by CADT and the Pan-Oncology drug review are not currently covered yet on PEI?

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

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

Again the hon. member is correct, there is that organization that does that preliminary work but its ultimately the responsibility of the province to regulate which drugs are provided her with a formulary, I do not have the accurate numbers here in front of me at my finger trips today but I'm committed and ill bring that back tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Altass:** PEI takes longer than any jurisdiction in Canada to approve new drugs for coverage, averaging 926 days, according to the Canadian Health Policy Institute. That is twice as long as Quebec and over one year longer than many other provinces to list new medications.

The minister also mentioned different committees at a provincial level which I believe is a fairly unique way to address this because we have such a backlog here on Prince Edward Island.

### **Timelines for drug approvals**

A question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Why does it take so long to review CADTH recommendations for medication coverage here on Prince Edward Island?

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

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

Again, I don't have the information that obviously the hon. member is referring to here with me today. I will certainly bring that back.

But again, I can say with certainty that the health care professionals here on PEI that make the decision, and it's not me as the minister that says: Yes you can have this drug or no you can't have that drug. We have health care professionals here on PEI that are paid to do the work that they do and I have every faith in their decision making process.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

So just to clarify, some of the medications that are currently not covered on Prince Edward Island include cancer, rare disease drugs, and mental health and heart disease medications.

I'll give an example, so PEI covered in total only 30 cancer medications recommended by the pan-oncology drug review by the year end in 2018, compared to 70 medications that are available to patients in New Brunswick and 74 in Ontario.

The health charities coalition of Canada states that: All people living in Canada should have equitable and timely access to necessary prescription medication based on the best possible health outcomes, rather than ability to pay.

### **Equitable and timely access to drugs**

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Do you agree with this statement?

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

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

I'll say it again, we have a tremendous amount of talent here on Prince Edward Island with regards to our health care professionals and the work that they do here providing health care to Islanders is second to none. I would never; I would never question their ability to make the proper decisions.

What the member refers to is a recommendation, a recommendation is just that, it's a recommendation. We have health care professionals working day in, day out in our health field here on PEI that I rely on to make those qualified decisions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, your final question.

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

Well I don't think it's difficult to see how not having access to the most up-to-date most effective medications would have an impact on the lives of Islanders, as well as, have long-term implications for our health care system.

#### **Timeline for unmet medication needs**

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Given the backlog of medications that are available to citizens in other provinces but not PEI, will the minister commit to a timetable to address the unmet medication needs of Islanders?

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

**Mr. Aylward:** Yes.

**Speaker:** Okay, that's the end of Question Period.

[End of Question Period]