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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

FRIDAY, 5 JULY 2019

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

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

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These are questions taken as notice from the budget estimates, perhaps this is the wrong time, but there are answers to questions in the Legislature. Just to highlight some of them.

There's one on about the donation of used fire trucks. No one's actually contacted the department from the Island and the trucks are greater than 30 years old.

There's other ones here about whether the nursery sells to the public and competes with the private sector. The answer is no. We do have trees on consignment for private nurseries like Van Kampen's, Doiron's, Earthform, Jewell's, Island Pride, Nabuurs, Kool Breeze, and John's Greenhouse.

We do not use herbicides on the 75,000 acres of public land we manage. A small amount is applied on private lands under the Forestry Management Program, only and if where needed.

In 2018, 70 hectares .02% of PEI's forested land received some glyphosate treatment. That's a product that's usually used on agricultural land.

There's several other great responses to your questions. I did want to highlight one more while I'm standing.

This was with free fishing licenses for seniors and veterans. They are currently free for those over 60, but there is a \$20 wildlife conservation fee. If you're over 65, it's a \$13 wildlife conservation fee and 100% of that goes to conservation work.

We don't have any free reduced options for veterans, but this could be done and we're working out logistics.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. member, anytime we have responses to questions, it's from Question Period, not budget estimates; just a little

reminder for next time for any of the ministers.

Thank you.

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

But they were great responses, thank you.

Although the official opposition has stated vigorously and repeatedly that we are disappointed in the amount of money pledged in the budget to the priorities that we have brought to government, one item I personally was glad to see receive some funding was for midwifery.

Many people have been advocating for the establishment of midwifery services on PEI for decades, and I believe that this is actually the first time that dedicated funding has found its way into a budget. For that, I am indeed grateful.

According to the budget, this year's allocation of \$150,000 is and I quote: "to allow these services to be appropriately established consistent with current and anticipated demand."

Midwifery services on PEI

A question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Could you tell the House exactly what that statement means?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

As I've spoken several times during this session with regards to midwifery services and in the past when I was in opposition, I'm certainly looking forward to having this service provided here on Prince Edward Island.

There is a process that needs to be followed. We need to ensure that when midwifery is

fully operational and introduced here on Prince Edward Island that it's just not done haphazardly.

There's consultation to be taken with, obviously, the college of physicians, the PEI Medical Society, we have to determine how it's going to be introduced, if there's going to be employees of Health PEI, if it's going to be user pay. So there's many issues around the introduction of midwifery here on Prince Edward Island.

But as the Minister of Health and Wellness, I'm extremely proud that I'm going to be the minister that will finally be able to make this happen here on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Midwifery services include, pre conception, anti-natal, delivery and post-delivery care and they've been shown to be cost-effective and to provide the type of continuity of care that a first class health care system is striving to provide, not just when it comes to child birth but in all areas of care.

This year's funding is presumably only the beginning of a strategy to make midwifery services available to all Island women who wish to use them.

Wait time for fully-funded midwifery services

To the same minister: How long can Island women expect to wait before fully-funded comprehensive midwifery services are available to them?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Again, as I mentioned, we're going through a process this current period of time with regards to the consultation to see how it's actually going to be integrated within our

health care system here on Prince Edward Island.

Standing here today, my goal as the Minister of Health and Wellness will be to have midwifery introduced, fully operational, available at the very latest, January 2020.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I mentioned yesterday that I had a really satisfying answer, that one almost beats the one that I had yesterday. I'm absolutely thrilled to hear that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: 2020 is under this budget.

Leader of the Opposition: Studies have repetitively shown midwifery to be both safe and cost effective. A recent evaluation of the midwifery approach to maternity care in Ontario noted that midwives have lower intervention rates, fewer readmissions to hospital and shorter hospital stays and there is much money to be saved, up to \$800 per midwifery attended hospital birth and almost \$2000 for home births where that is appropriate.

Midwifery services availability to Island women

To the minister: With such obvious benefits to the provincial person, to mothers and babies, does he envisage midwifery services to be available to all Island women, who desire to have them, regardless of where they live on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Again, this is all part of the process of consultation with our other health care services here on Prince Edward Island. We can't just simple say you know what: we've got two, three midwives, go out and provide the service. We need to ensure that they're integrated correctly and properly with the

other health care service providers here on Prince Edward Island.

I know Susan England has just recently dropped off some documentation to my office and we're in the process of scheduling a time that, myself, as the health minister, can sit down with Ms. England and her association so that we can work through some of these details as well and I certainly look forward to that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Indeed, Joyce England, has been the primary advocate for this for decades here on Prince Edward Island, represents BORN PEI and came to us prior to the election, the most recent election, with a very clearly, articulated and laid out, fully costed plan, which I assume is what the minister will receive.

You mentioned in the answer I loved so much a minute ago minister, that January 2020, which actually falls within this budgetary year. I see that only \$150,000 is currently devoted to midwifery. Does he imagine that that amount of money is actually going to provide the beginnings of midwifery services to Island women here on PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

That would be my anticipation to start with. Yes, obviously January is still in this fiscal year which would then be leaving us three months.

Again, when we sit down and have this collaborative consultation process with the association, with the college, with the various societies, we'll have a better determination of exactly how many midwives would be required here on Prince Edward Island, what the regulations are around them, how they're going to be

integrated with the other health care service providers.

And until we have those stages done, it's impossible for me to answer precisely, exactly, how many we're going to have, where they're going to be.

But once we've worked through that process, I'm very confident that Islanders will be very pleased with the rollout.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: The documentation that Joyce brought to me last year indicated that in order for us to have a fully-funded comprehensive midwifery service here on Prince Edward Island, it would cost about a million dollars a year.

User-pay for midwifery services

One of the statements made, again, in the answer I loved so much, I'm starting to love it a little bit less now – was you mentioned user-pay, could you elaborate a little bit on what you might mean by that? A user-pay for midwifery services seems like an odd statement for a health minister to say.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Once again, as I said, we have to still go through this whole consultation process with our current health care providers. Currently on Prince Edward Island there is approximately 1,400 births annually here on Prince Edward Island and currently, as well, our compliment of health care professionals, OBGYN's etc cetera, are more than capable of handling that number of births.

Yes there is a request to have midwifery here on PEI, I'm extremely supportive of this service, I always have been and I will continue to be. But until we have all the details around how midwifery will be introduced, integrated in our health care system, it's impossible for me to answer specifically, precisely today on how that will

be rolled out. It's a process and we're working through that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Can I just get a confirmation though from the minister that when he used the word user-pay he's not suggesting that for Island women to access midwifery services that they will themselves have to actually pay for that?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Again, as I've said, we are working through a process currently right now and until we have all the details and we've had all the consultation with all the health care providers here on Prince Edward Island in, addition to the midwifery association, I can't specifically answer that question.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Wow.

One health service that was not include in the government's platform or in last week's budget was an expansion of dental services to those on a low-income, including elderly Islanders and also to broaden the services that are currently available to people on social assistance.

There's a large gap that exists for many Islanders who have dental needs, yet have no private coverage and insufficient funds to access even a basic level of dental care that they need to be comfortable and healthy.

Basic level of dental care for all Islanders

Question to the same minister: Does government have any plans to expand dental services so that these Islanders who are

falling into that gap are offered a basic level of dental care?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Again, as the new Minister of Health and Wellness here on Prince Edward Island, seven weeks in, there's many conversations going on.

Just recently, I've met with Dr. Joanne Stewart who was a dental practitioner in Stratford and we're talking right now about an issue that she's brought forward to me that I never really thought about before and it's with regards to our seniors when they go into long-term care facilities.

Quite often, their dentures are in very good shape, their teeth are in very good shape, but unfortunately, they don't receive a dental the care in long-term care facilities that perhaps they should.

I know my father, himself, when he was a resident of one of these facilities I had to take him out to a dentist to have some work done.

The association is looking forward to sitting down with me to share some of their ideas moving forward and I look forward to that opportunity.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I appreciate the segway. Currently our public dental services are available to all children under the age of 17 and I'm personally aware of how important that is and how valuable a service that is – the societal benefits of giving every Island child the opportunity to enter adulthood in good dental health.

Demographic changes, however, indicate that increasingly more of the demand for dental services will fall on the elderly. A

segment of the population more likely than ever to have retained their own teeth and who, often as they age, lose whatever dental coverage they may have had prior to retirement.

Dental care for elderly

To the same minister: Has any thought been put into shifting some of the emphasis of publicly funded dental care to that demographic?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

The simple answer to that question is: no.

We're in very early days of this government. Again, I've been minister for seven weeks now. I'm having discussions, consultations with the dental association. You just finished asking very important questions around the child dental program. Roughly we have about a 52% uptake on that program. I'd like to see that higher because dental health is – as you would well you know dental health is a very important aspect of an individual's overall health.

But until I'm able to get out and actually sit down with the dental association to see what their thoughts and recommendations are to speak internally with the public dental program, I can't give you any hard fast answers, but it is a file that I'm working on and I look forward to bringing some results back.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Every year in our Island schools grade three students write literacy and math assessments. Throughout the year we work on building the foundations of literacy and numeracy skills. Students are supported with guiding visuals, such as anchor charts, word walls, number lines, alphabets, whatever it is that they need to learn and grow.

At all times the teacher is circulating working one-on-one with students and in groups. When it comes time for the assessments, we must remove all visuals and we are not allowed to help them, should they need it.

Results of literacy and math assessments

A question to the Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning: Could you please tell us what data the results of these assessments provide?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, assessments are an area that we're looking at very closely in the department. As you know our deputy minister comes from a strong education background and has been involved in advocating in this area before.

So the data is meant to provide direction for improving curriculum and learning practices like the ones you talked about and provide professional development for teachers where needed.

I can say the direction of the department is we feel we've collected a lot of data, it's time to step back and put that data into use to do exactly what it's supposed to do.

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

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I taught grade three, I felt a lot of pressure and was relieved to move to a different grade level the following year. I loved the age group; they were fun, engaged and creative.

As an educator, I both, understand and implement best practices in my work, yet found myself under the stress doing the complete opposite and taught to the test in preparation for these assessments. Because it was my job, I already knew where my students would struggle and where they might find success or not.

A question to the minister: Do you believe we require a formal assessment to gather this data?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's a great question and it's a hot topic of debate among teachers, as well as department staff.

In order budget when we get on the floor here very soon, I'm looking forward to it because we are doing a reorganization of our department. What we're going to do is take the silos where we have curriculum and assessment and really delivery and we're going to try and focus them in.

So if you're a grade three teacher, we're going to try and put the assessments held by the department, in the day-to-day classroom level so that the teachers have input as well and can use those. And we don't go through this big provincial common assessment, one off. That's the vision and I look forward to getting the members input into exactly how we do that.

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

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are examples of jurisdictions all over the world who are leading in the field of education, Finland for example. The mission of their system is to graduate happy humans, who know themselves, their strengths, their talents and their challenges. They have a whatever-they-need approach from the time they enter school until around the age of seven or eight years old, a truly child-centered approach.

They take the time to build relationships and grow a love of literacy, numeracy and community. The goal is that they will be on an equal playing field to achieve individual success, whatever that looks like for them. They begin academics at the age of eight, so no academics before then unless it's an interest for them.

Grade three assessments and learning needs

A question to the minister: If teachers already have that data, would the money we spend on grade three assessments not be better spent on meeting the individual leaning needs of these students?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, of course, the member is correct. There are lots of jurisdictions that do different things.

In Alberta, I became aware recently that they do a common assessment at the beginning of grade three to assess how much the students know to help the teachers when they go into grade three instead of trying to do that at the end and then apply it to the next class coming up.

I think what you're going to see in our department is we are going to be putting the grade three assessments on hold so that we can actually go and address it at the classroom level for the next year at least.

Again, I'm looking forward to working with the member who has a lot of experience and I think it's going to be an exciting time for teachers and for students.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Islanders are concerned about the state of their Island's water resources. I heard at many doorsteps during the last election, and I would be shocked if I was the only one, there was unprecedented public engagement throughout the consultation of the *Water Act*. Furthermore, this government has repeated their catch phrase in this Legislature 'it's about people.'

Water withdrawal regulations

Question to the minister: Do you feel that the water withdrawal regulations released yesterday are an accurate representation of the concerns that you've heard from Islanders?

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

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think the department has done a fantastic job of putting these regulations together. It was a little unclear to me as to why the previous administration held onto them so long because my goal has been, all along since the very first week that I became minister – and I said it publicly – was to release these for public consultation because we want to make sure that, indeed, they do reflect the priorities of Islanders and that's exactly what we're going to do.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I went for a really interesting drive yesterday morning. I joined approximately about 50 other Islanders in the Kensington-Malpeque area, which is District 20, to tour holding ponds in that area. To say that there's concerned people in the area would be an understatement.

Holding ponds in Kensington area

Question for the minister responsible for environment: Could you tell us a little bit about those holding ponds in the area?

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

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, you'll know from the media yesterday that really right now there's very little, if any, regulation that's applied in a formal sense to holding ponds and I asked the department to look into and get me a list of all the holding ponds that we have on the Island because that wasn't information that was tracked.

There are about 19 holding ponds and in some cases, they're very large. As I stated yesterday, it's the public perception, and there's a lot of reality to that, that these holding ponds are built really to skirt the high-capacity well moratorium by combining low-capacity wells acting like

high-capacity wells and filling a holding pond.

We are taking action, both in my department and the department of agriculture, to address this situation to make sure the proper regulations are in place, to make sure we protect the public interest in water and in land.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I'm happy to hear this.

It would appear that the design of these holding ponds are for the purpose, as you mentioned, to skirt around legislation set out by the *Water Act*.

Yesterday during a briefing on the water withdrawal regulations, the minister informed the opposition caucus that public funds have been awarded to complete work on some of these holding ponds. I also understand that this government has plans to stop this funding.

Cancellation of government funding for holding ponds

Question to the minister responsible for environment: Could you please tell me when this government will officially cancel the program?

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

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, indeed, it was brought to my attention that in some cases – and I couldn't tell you the exact mechanism of how that works – that's of course, the minister of agriculture's portfolio, but in some cases there is funding that's provided to farmers that may be applied to holding ponds and we are going to stop that funding as soon as possible.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Social Development and Housing and the minister responsible for West Prince.

Several months ago, the province issued a request for proposals respecting a 30-megawatt wind project. Now, I'm assuming, or I heard, there were three proposals put in, one from western PEI, one from Irishtown area, and the other one from Eastern Kings.

Status of RFP proposal for wind project

Minister, could you update the House on the status of this RFP?

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the member for the question on wind. Finally, we're getting some questions about wind here and it's great that he sees how important it is. I know from past experience that he has spoken highly about our wind facilities here on Prince Edward Island.

Gail Shea before him thought it was very important. The hon. minister of housing, he thinks it's very important and he's been after me on this issue quite a bit.

We do bring over \$21 million worth of revenue into the province with our wind farms, and we produce clean energy while we do it.

On the RFP that we put out, there are sites that are being considered. At this point, we expect to have some announcement on the RFP process by close to the end of summer.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, your first supplementary.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

O'Leary has a business organization that is represented in the West Prince area representing the proposal that was put forward. They did a lot of background work, they spoke to the landowners, they had them signed on.

They have all the assessments ready. So they're ready to go ahead with this project.

Minister: Is your department – could they meet with this organization before you make that announcement, before you make your decision. I'm assuming a decision hasn't been made yet.

O'Leary business and wind project

So would you meet with this organization in person so that they could discuss the reasons why West Prince should be chosen?

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So yes, I would love to come up and meet with them.

This is a file that, as you know hon. member, in this House I've talked about with much excitement since I've started seven weeks ago.

I think there's a lot of opportunity for Prince Edward Island to deliver clean energy to Islanders.

We have over 73 megawatts of clean energy that we produce now. This project is going to bring on another 30 megawatts. As I spoke about in the House, in the not too distant future we're going to bring on another 40 megawatts.

We're going to have an opportunity to bring all kinds of clean energy online for Islanders. We all should be excited about that.

It's great to show leadership as this government has for a number of years on wind energy and as this government has in a number of years for environmental issues and the sustainability here in province.

So I'd be more than happy to go up and meet with the group up there, and hear what they have to say and tour the area. If the hon. member wants to join me, that would be fantastic.

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

Mr. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is going to go to the minister of health, but first I want to kind of talk about the seven weeks in thing.

Hopefully in the next – today might be a little bit of a graduation maybe we can start to look at next week calling it two months, and start talking along those lines. I'm going to show you that the government is quite capable of making decisions.

My question today is about priorities. In 2018/19, Health PEI spent less \$1.5 million on corporate services. That is the bureaucratic centre for Health PEI and pays for CEOs and others. This year's government is budgeting more than \$2.2 million for the same office.

That's about three quarters of a million more.

Would the minister of health explain the large increase?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I'd be certainly happy to answer that question when we present the health care budget on the floor.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McNeilly: The minister of health served as the critic for eight years so he should have a basic understanding of the importance of every dollar spent.

In the same day the department of health spent a little over \$1.7 million on health recruitment and retention – retention is an extremely competitive market in our country for doctors and is becoming increasingly crucial.

Health recruitment and budget

This year's budget for health recruitment and retention is up only \$279,000.

Given the need to recruit and retain healthcare professionals recognized by all Islanders, why such a small increase?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

First and foremost, I'd like to correct the hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty. I wasn't the health critic for eight years; it was just shy of seven years.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: At least he didn't say seven weeks.

Mr. Aylward: Exactly.

With regards to recruitment and retention, yes, it is an extremely important aspect of providing health care on Prince Edward Island.

I'm very proud to state that we are going down the road process of actually engaging the medical society of Prince Edward Island to get them to actually get the doctors to help in the recruitment stage.

More importantly, on the retention side, we know that's extremely important. I harped about that for a long time when I was health critic.

There's many things that we need to implement to ensure that we're retaining our doctors here. We've just released an RFP for an EMR and that's one of the things that the doctors have been asking for and we're moving forward in that project and that will help with retention.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our caucus priority is health.

Central bureaucracy and primary care

My question again is to the minister about priorities: Why is Health PEI getting an increase for central bureaucracy that is three times the size of an increase for recruitment and retention for primary care?

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Once again, I look forward to having a fulsome conversation and discuss and debate on that when we bring our budget to the floor.

Hopefully that's next week, that's totally up to the people across the floor. Looking forward to sitting at the table and presenting our budget; can't wait.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Aylward: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Kings County Memorial Hospital is located in my district and is relied on by people all through Kings County. The hospital is almost 50 years old now and there have been some badly needed repairs done there over the last year or two. The laboratory area is currently in the process of being renovated.

Further repairs for KCMH

Question to the health minister: Is there any further repair work planned for Kings County Memorial Hospital this coming year?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

KCMH is certainly (Indistinct) important to providing health care in the Kings County region. Certainly it provides excellent care for residency in around the Montague and surrounding areas.

It is an older facility. I believe it was built in the early '60s. Over the recent years there's been priorities put into replace the emergency backup generator, emergency transfer switch, upgrading the medical gas system and upgrades to the roof, all of which were essential.

I'm working and my department is working very closely with the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy to do an analysis on this building and to see what needs are based on.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

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

Mr. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On April 6th last year my predecessor asked the now Leader of the Third Party, then the health minister, about a structural assessment of the KCMH and the potential for improved ambulatory services there to serve all of Kings County.

My predecessor secured a commitment for those to be looked at.

Documents and reports of assessment re: KCMH

Question to the health minister: I don't expect you to have this information at hand so could you bring back any reports or documents completed on these commitments?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Working in conjunction with TIE we'll certainly look internally to see what documents are there and if those reports are complete, I'd be more than happy to bring them back and table them.

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

Mr. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As KCMH gets older, the repair bills will surely grow so it would be good to know what our needs will be in the short, medium and long-term.

KCMH plays an important role in the delivery of health care now and has the potential to do more with the right mix of services, staff and infrastructure.

The health centre and hospital have outgrown themselves; there is a significant need for a new facility, one which could potentially have a hospital, primary care, home care, community mental health and public health, all under one roof.

New facility for Kings County

Minister, would you commit to having those needs assessments complete before the capital budget process this fall and perhaps we can get a new facility in Kings County.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

When it comes to the delivery of health care here on Prince Edward Island, it's paramount that it's done properly.

I've stated here in the Legislative Assembly over the last several weeks of my intent as the new Minister of Health and Wellness that we need to look at possibly new ways of delivering health care here on Prince Edward Island. That process is going forward now, we're again, sitting down, meeting with health care providers, having consultation to see what areas we might be able to improve on.

With regards to the infrastructure of KCMH, yes, I've already stated on record that it is an aging facility that needs to be looked at and once I have an opportunity to sit down with the staff from Health PEI – sit down and meet with the folks from TIE, we'll certainly see where that assessment is.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd just like to step back just a moment and as I've mentioned during the briefing the Minister of Environment, Water and Climate Change had let the opposition caucus know about funding for some holding ponds coming out of government and when I asked the minister if he could tell me when they would seize that program, the answer was as soon as possible.

Funding for holding ponds

I find that a very vague statement and I was wondering if the minister would mind elaborating a little on that for us.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Land.

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, member opposite, thank you for that question.

The funding apparently came from my department through the CAT program, the Canadian Agriculture Partnership program. It's reviewed every year, that will become in a review now and there will be no more funding going forward because of the announcement yesterday so I'll share with you that.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: I am happy to know that this funding is not going to continue but I will pose another question to the minister.

Current spend on holding ponds

Could you please share with Islanders how much money has been spent on holding ponds?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Land.

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Speaker and member opposite, I acknowledge your concern, I also campaigned on the fact that I protect the Islands water and I will continue to do that. I acknowledge the important of agriculture and water on PEI and we are reviewing that now and I don't know how much money was given out. I'll have to take that back and I'll come back with that answer. Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We do have the budget estimates coming up for the department of agriculture so I guess that would be a heads up on that one, minister.

The minister has said that the government will inspect – I actually sent this out to the environment yesterday, said that this government will be inspecting these existing holding ponds.

Impacts of holding ponds on residents

Question to the minister responsible for environment, will you be talking to residents that live in the vicinity of holding ponds to see if they have experienced any impacts?

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

Mr. Trivers: Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Thank you so much for that question because – let me first of all say any islander that has an issue they feel with their water, their well, they see it in a waterway, please, please report that into the department of the environment because we want to go and look at it. Over the years, there has literally been a handful.

This is like the past 30 years, of reports that have come in about let's say, wells running dry and this sort of thing. So if there is an issue, please report it.

When the staff goes out to do the inspection of the holding ponds, their initial pass is with the cooperation of course of the holding pond owners, identify the amount of water that's coming into them and were going to focus on trying to understand the volume of water that's being used and then we can use our mottos to know if that's having a negative impact to start off with.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday I heard from residents that at least two wells have gone dry in the area where holding ponds have been constructed.

Impact to residents re: dry wells

A question to the minister responsible for environment: What will the government do to help these people?

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

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That situation where they should immediately contact the department of environment. We will respond very quickly to that, we will go look at their situation, evaluate it and find out the cause of the wells going dry. There's a lot of reasons why they could go dry, including anything as simple as a pump gone bad but if they feel it's due to the holding pond, we will research it and get to the bottom of it.

Speaker: The hon. member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As long as I've lived on Prince Edward Island, the province has worked on bringing the National Building Code, also known as the NBC to PEI. It looks like it's actually happening now, in generally its good thing for PEI to meet our national standards of building, after all, we want buildings that are save to live in, protect is from fire and collapse.

One aspect of the code however disturbs me and that is the requirement that the wood used must be kiln dried and grade stamped. This illuminates the use of wood cut and milled locally. I know that this requirement is a little bearing on building safety, as a matter of fact the Royal heritage building on PEI was built using local, ungraded and not kiln dried wood, including this building and the Province House.

National Building Code and use of local wood

So my question to the Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture: Will you

make sure that PEI's adaptation of the NBC includes permission to use local wood so that local businesses, housing, and milling local wood can thrive?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Land, Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and member opposite.

The building code falls under my department in the land section.

We're very excited about the building code coming out and it's a long time coming. It's going to be so important for the construction business and homeowners to have this code come in.

Your question about the stamped wood, the kiln dried wood, that's for housing. You can still build smaller structures such as storage facilities, mini barns with unstamped wood.

It's a liability issue that it has to be kiln dried and stamped.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: Well thank you for the answer.

Just being able to build a shed in the backyard doesn't quite do what most rural Islanders traditionally do, which is to go out and cut their own wood to build their own house.

In addition to that, using wood as a construction material is an excellent method to sequester carbon as the wood in the building often stays there for hundreds of years. This is a much more effective strategy than chipping or burning the wood, which sends all the carbon dioxide contained in the stand immediately into the atmosphere.

Use of local lumber and creation of jobs

Question to the minister: Will you emphasize in Cabinet that using local lumber is a far better strategy for

sequestering carbon and also create local jobs?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Land.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I will acknowledge the situation. I'll mention that through Cabinet, but as the minister of land and with the building code under my department, it's important that the liability of structures be held.

Stamped wood is important for the liability of construction business and the industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: Well thank you for your answer.

I am an architect. I've built and supervised many buildings, and it is not really a liability issues per say. There are many other ways.

You can, for instance, locally inspect the wood. Just look at it. That's what they did in the old days. If there was a knot in the wood that shouldn't be there, they just discarded it as simple as that.

Anyway, nevertheless replanting forests appear to be one of the strategies for this province to sequester carbon, yet, we see forests cleared for lumber harvesting, blueberry fields, potato fields, subdivisions, and woodchip harvesting.

Net increase in carbon and reforestation

Question to the Minister of Environment, Water and Climate Change: How exactly is the government going to ensure that there will be a net increase in carbon sequestering wood?

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

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

That was a rather lengthy preamble to the question, so I hope I can remember everything that was in there.

I'm getting a little confused because the previous question was about cutting down trees for lumber, and now you're asking how we're going to make sure we have enough forests to sequester carbon.

So as it was pointed out in budget estimates, based on the numbers from the 2010 report we're actually deforesting faster than we're populating the forest. As well, we know that keeping existing forest is more important than planting new forest. So those will be the guiding factors we use to prepare our strategy for reforestation on the Island.

I look forward to the member's input on that.

In 2020, we are going to have a report – we'll add updated numbers on how fast deforestation has occurred on the Island and then we'll be able to prepare an evidence-based, science-based approach to forestation on the Island.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, your final question.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday during Question Period, the hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank made this House aware that the Attorney General has filed a notice of intervention in the case of the constitutionality of the federal carbon tax that's before the Supreme Court of Canada.

When asked on the substance of that intervention, the Premier said, quote: 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.

The Supreme Court of Canada is the highest appellant authority in the country and I can't understand how the province can participate after a ruling is brought down.

Constitutionality of federal carbon tax

Question to the Attorney General: What position is the province intervening on and are you willing to commit to tabling the factum and other materials that you are providing when ready?

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

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, members opposite, it was just – I was informed the process of the legal system to hold themselves into interfere status and that's what we are doing. It's just a process. It's not meaning that we're involved in it, it's just – that's the part – I'll take any other information back to you next week.

Thank you.

Speaker: End of Question Period.

[End of Question Period]