



Session:	2/65
Date:	25 November 2016
No:	31

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

FRIDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2016



Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

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

**State of high-speed Internet (further)**

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

Yesterday, the Premier was very clear in this House and told Islanders that by the end of next year we are going to have the best Internet service in Canada.

Question to the Premier: How do you plan to accomplish this amazing feat?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, in a subsequent exchange with the Member from Rustico-Emerald, I referred to it as the most complete service compared with other provinces, that Prince Edward Islanders will have service covering more of our province than any other province – including rural areas – across this country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Later on in Question Period the Premier said:

“By the end of next year Prince Edward Island will be the province that is the closest to having complete Internet access from tip-to-tip.”

Question to the Premier: Is that the only benchmark you’re setting for calling Internet service the best in Canada, as you promised, for Prince Edward Island?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, on the question of how that will be accomplished, it’s going to be accomplished in a competitive environment with entrants

into the market who are bringing services in a variety of formats.

I think it’s going to be for this government and for the members of this House and for the customers to be sure that we have the best possible information, and that we’re encouraging those companies to give the best possible service, and that’s how we’re going to achieve it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

A lot of wiggling going on over there with those answers.

Here’s another quote: PEI will be the first province in Canada to have high-speed province-wide. That wasn’t the Premier. That was former minister Neil LeClair in 2009 talking about the government’s \$8 million Internet deal with Bell Aliant.

Question to the Premier: Why should Islanders believe the same tired old promises that your tired old government is bringing forward?

**Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

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

At least we moved up a year from 2008, we’re now in 2009.

This is a very technical issue, as we’ve seen with the companies that we’ve consulted with over the past three weeks. The Internet service from one end of the Island to the other is a complicated issue. There’s three forms of service that’s being provided.

We’re working with each of these companies and trying to see where their business plan and business cases is going forward, and if we can be a part of that and help get better service for Islanders, we’re going to do that Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**PEI Westside Funding deal documentation**

**Mr. MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, after nine years of asking, the minister of economic development did an abrupt 180 and is committed to releasing the full, unredacted Internet contract and extension signed by this government.

Minister, will you do the same and release a complete unredacted copy of government's secret deal with PEI Westside Funding on Testori and Wiebel?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

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

The company in question that (Indistinct) relevant to or talking about this matter is presently before the courts, and it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the specifics at this time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, just like the egaming scandal, this is a case of another secret deal with the now-finance minister and Melissa MacEachern in the middle of it.

Can the minister of economic development explain why this government has repeatedly refused to release all documentation of this secret deal?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

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

As I repeat, there's legal technicalities that we can't overcome inside this rail or outside this rail. One of the former shareholders, Testori, has filed with the courts a claim against our government in this case. Our legal counsel has advised us not to release any debt-sale agreements with PEI Westside Funding until this matter is settled in the courts.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, this again is another secret deal that our members have been asking government to release since we uncovered it in 2013.

We've asked it in Question Period, asked in committee, we've FOIPPed it, and nothing but silence.

Minister, just what is contained in this secret deal that this government is so desperate to keep from Islanders?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member realizes, as I said yesterday in providing a contract on the Internet services, that this government is very transparent and very open, and we've brought in numerous items now within government and we're legislating.

Whistleblower is the most recent or will be forthcoming. We're not hiding anything, and we're not hiding behind any large corporations. As we've plainly stated, we don't – as the Premier has stated, we don't do business as some others have done in the past. We're a new government. We're transparent. We're accountable to the people of PEI. We're going to continue to build the economic future of PEI to be of prosperity, and we have to deal with large corporations from time to time –

**Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**FOIPP and PEI Westside Funding**

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

Minister, if you're open and transparent, why did you deny our FOIPP request for a copy of this secret agreement?

**Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Mr. Speaker, we discussed the FOIPP issue yesterday and I think there as a motion on the floor and passed.

But our department would follow the FOIPP process as it would at any request, and that's what we intend to do on this one as well.

But again, this is before the courts and we have a company that's challenging our government right now and we have to be aware of that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, when we FOIPPed this document the department's response was we couldn't have it because it relates to a decision by Crown council with regards to a prosecuting offence.

Minister, what is the offence referred in the response letter?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

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

We're talking about a company that we sold our interest in, obviously, many years ago. Just in reference to this, the wages that accumulated over the time this company was in business contributing to the Island economy was \$65 million, and the capital expenditures that they included was \$12 million.

These companies, even though there are some failures along the way, less than 0.88% overall on an average each year, we have to consume these companies because they're providing employment at the time for Islanders. They are providing wages, better quality wages for Islanders –

**Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

As the Premier said in the last few days, the head of a public body is the minister. The FOIPPed act section the minister's used to deny or request it: The head of a public body can refuse to disclose information if such a move could reveal any information relating to or used in the exercise of prosecutorial discretion.

Minister, what offence was committed in relation to government's secret deal, and what action did this government take or not take?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

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

Again, and I know the hon. member is enforceable in the questions, but the hon. member must remember that we're representing the taxpayers of PEI, just like he is. I know that he stands behind us, that that is 100%, and he wouldn't want us to jeopardize the taxpayers in a legal lawsuit from a company.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

#### **Testori-Wiebel tax auction**

**Mr. MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, just yesterday, this House unanimously passed our motion calling for review of the FOIPP act.

The minister's decision to deny a request states an offence took place and this secret agreement was used in the decision as how government would act in this offence.

Minister, why did government send officials to the tax auction of Testori and Wiebel properties this spring who bid high enough to drive any other interests away but not high enough to trigger the reserve?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

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

Look, this whole situation with Testori is an unfortunate situation, and it happens from time to time that we have business failures for economic climate reasons at the time.

This is an issue we take very seriously. We'll be dealing with loan write-offs, I'm sure, some day in the House here and I hope to answer some really good questions in relevance to that and what they contributed to the economy at the time.

But I think we live and learn as we move forward and we'll continue to grow the economy of PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

#### **Testori and Wiebel re: Summerside**

**Mr. MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, just last month Testori and Wiebel filed for bankruptcy.

Minister, how is the city of Summerside the primary creditor for both companies if this government sold first securities on both properties in this secret deal that cost taxpayers over \$8 million?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Could he be specific in the question, Mr. Speaker, please?

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

Minister, the city of Summerside is the primary creditor for both companies. That's come from research done from the media, and quite a bit of an investigation was done on it. We're wondering why the city of Summerside is the primary creditor right now for both these companies.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

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

I'm from the understanding, in my notes, that the city of Summerside has been paid in full.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

#### **PEI Westside Funding documentation (further)**

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

This deal cost taxpayers over \$8 million and 200 good-paying full-time jobs in Summerside. Today shows why the minister should step up and release this secret agreement.

Minister, why have you committed to releasing the unredacted Internet agreement with Bell but you refuse to release this second agreement?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

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

Just to reiterate what I've talked about before on this company. When we had some loans within that company there was \$93 million in wages and there was \$27 million in capital investment by this company. It surely offsets some of the negativity surrounding this file.

We have to continue to grow the PEI economy, and by doing that we have to explore all options on trying to prospect new companies to PEI. If you take a look at the Canadian Federation of Independent Business recently released yesterday – PEI leads the country at 71% in consumer confidence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

#### **Low-income housing waitlist re: families**

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

Yesterday, the Minister of Family and Human Services told the hon. Member from

Souris-Elmira that the waitlist for low-income housing sits at 1,300.

How many of those 1,300 on the waitlist for low-income housing are families?

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

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

As I said yesterday as well, affordable housing is one of the most important social infrastructures in the community, and our government is aware of that.

Of the 1,300 that are on the waitlist approximately 300 are families. However, as I also mentioned yesterday, we are reviewing that waitlist because in the past the waitlist didn't have any criteria as to who could apply. There may be people on there who aren't in need that are on the wait list. However, when we do select applicants that go into the public housing, it is based on the need.

It's not how long you've been there, it's always based on need. We take care of those that need it most first.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Low-income housing waitlist re: single parents**

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

Question again to the Minister of Family and Human Services: How many of those people on that waitlist of 1,300 people waiting for low-income housing are single parents?

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

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

We don't have it broken down as to what the ages are except for the seniors and families.

However, if the hon. member would like that maybe we could dig into that, but I think that would be digging too far into a

client's file. I'd have to get back to you on that, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Low-income housing waitlist re: women**

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

I would actually like to know the demographic, geographic, and respecting the privacy of those people, but we want to know who is slipping through the cracks and why they're slipping through the cracks.

You just said that it's going to be based on need, but also based on other parameters. We've seen over and over again how this government makes those parameters so narrow that no one qualifies.

To the minister: How many of those people, the 1,300 people on the waitlist for low-income housing, are women?

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

**Ms. Mundy:** Mr. Speaker, this government cares about the well-being of all Islanders.

I never said that there wasn't any criteria. The criteria is based on need. The need, we take into account their income, their assets, their age, their health. Those are the things that need is based on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Low-income housing waitlist geographical and demographical information**

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

I believe the hon. minister did say that they were looking at the parameters, that some people on the waitlist did not need to be on the waitlist. Those are actually narrowing the parameters of who is in need.

Can the minister please provide to this House the geographic and demographic information about the 1,300 people on the

waitlist minus any personal data with respect to privacy?

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

**Ms. Mundy:** Mr. Speaker, when I said that we would be looking at the criteria, we'd be looking at the need income-wise.

We wouldn't be looking at if it was a single mom or otherwise. The only thing that we would be looking at is separating the seniors from families. That's what I meant when I was talking about criteria.

But I do want to also say that we are committed to doing our best with aligning the housing supply with the present and future demands. We are undertaking a housing strategy and that is going to be taking a look at the housing waitlist as well, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Low-income housing waitlist re: HST**

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

Question again to the Minister of Family and Human Services: Do you think your government bringing in the HST in 2012 and increasing it again this year has helped shrink or grow the waitlist of that 1,300 people looking for low-income housing?

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

**Ms. Mundy:** Mr. Speaker, I think I mentioned yesterday about all the programs that our government does have to help low-to moderate-income Islanders.

I didn't get a chance to get through them all yesterday so I'll try a little bit harder today.

We have increased the food rates to our social assistance clients, a total of investments of over \$2.8 million. We've increased funding to our community partner organizations; the comfort allowance for those low to moderate Islanders. We've increased group home beds. A housing strategy.

Millions and millions into PEI home renovation programs that help Islanders stay in their homes, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Poverty reduction strategy**

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

Thirteen hundred Islanders who do not have a home. We know this government – in 2015 there was a progress report done on poverty reduction; 2016, progress report on poverty reduction, or supposedly there was.

We feel that there's obviously a struggle here with this government about the poverty reduction plan. Why are we struggling with 1,300 people without homes?

To the minister: Why has your government abandoned any poverty reduction strategy, not providing an update? There has been no update on goals achieved since 2014.

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

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

First of all I need to clarify. There are not 1,300 families that are homeless. There are 1,300 people that are on a waitlist for low-to moderate-income housing.

We do recognize that some Islanders are struggling and some Islanders are anxious. But it doesn't do anything to exploit those fears or exploit them being anxious. Exploitation has never created a single job and it has never, ever fed a single family.

Our government is committed to giving Islanders the tools and supports that they need when they need it most, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

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

Our job in opposition is to question, and question for all Islanders. We are not

exploiting. We are asking what the plan is for those 1,300 families that are waiting for low-income housing.

We get back to the strategy, the poverty strategy that this government has. Does the minister think that winging it on the poverty reduction strategy will be more effective to finding those 1,300 Islanders low-income housing?

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

**Ms. Mundy:** Mr. Speaker, I'm confident our government is doing the right thing.

We have a very full and rich mandate letter, my department does, and part of it is a poverty reduction strategy. We have a working group together right now that has been taking a look at the actual true picture of poverty on Prince Edward Island and they will be coming back to the House probably, I'd, say middle of next year with some kind of an update or report.

We have engaged a task force, so we will be engaging a task force that will be taking a look at the poverty reduction strategy, but it doesn't happen overnight.

Again, I am convinced that our government is doing the right thing, and I'll give you a little quote from Eleanor Roosevelt: Do what's in your heart that you feel to be right because you're going to be criticized anyway.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **Workers Compensation Board concerns**

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A series of reports last year from the Ontario Federation of Labour found that their workplace safety and insurance board not only routinely interferes with the medical care of injured workers, but also that it pressures health professionals to change their diagnoses to the detriment of injured workers. The same situation is also emerging in Alberta where they have an ongoing review.

Similar concerns about the WCB here in PEI have been raised with members of this House

A question to the Premier: What action has government taken to investigate concerns with our Workers Compensation Board?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I'd welcome the hon. member to present or table in this House the information that he's referring to.

The Workers Compensation Board is an independent or an arm's length body from government. We have an interactive relationship with the chair or the board so we'd be happy to take up this question and to pursue it, if there's some evidence that the hon. member would like us to consider.

Thank you.

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

### **Recourse for injured workers**

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government has repeatedly expressed how essential it is that government remain connected to the people which it serves and to improve accessibility, accountability, and transparency.

A question to the Premier: What recourse do Islanders, and especially injured workers, have if they feel they have been treated unfairly by a government department or office?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, in the case of workers' compensation, there is a workers' compensation appeal board, and people have the opportunity to pursue that avenue, and they have the opportunity to speak with a case worker or with officials at workers' compensation.

As the hon. member has indicated, members of the public will approach their MLA, and we can be very thankful that we've got 27

MLAs representing across the province so the people can have access to them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **Ombudsperson's office**

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I alluded to in my preamble to my first question, a series of reports have clearly demonstrated that there are problems with this process in Ontario and in Alberta, and I suspect here in Prince Edward Island as well.

When this government first came into office in 2007 one of its election promises was the creation of an ombudsperson's office. Currently, Prince Edward Island is the only province or territory in the country without such an office.

Could the Premier tell this House if there are any plans to revisit the creation of an ombudsperson's office and if not, why not?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in response to the previous question, Prince Edward Islanders have a great advantage in that we have 27 members of the Legislature representing approximately 4,000 people apiece, and those people have access to their MLAs, and I think we're all proud to serve in that role.

Further, I have to go back to the first point that was raised, that there was somehow interference with the professionals in the workers' compensation process. I encourage the member or other members who have evidence along those lines not to be quoting reports from Alberta or somewhere else, but to bring forward that evidence and we'll be happy to address it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

### **Pace of school consultations**

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

My question is for the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture. The Westisle family of schools Home and School association made a unified presentation at the public meetings at Westisle, as well as the principals.

I heard from many constituents people are worried. All were very critical of the process being used in this review. They pointed out many of their concerns, but a common one is that it's moving too fast.

Since the Westisle family is undergoing a phase two review, which is more in-depth, and with the concerns put forward by these frontline folks, will the minister intervene and slow this process down?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

The Public School Branch is well on their way in reviewing all the families of schools across the Province of Prince Edward Island. I'm very pleased to say that to date we're in step two of a five-step process. We've had over 200 written submissions about suggestions and ideas, we've had 50 public presentations on ideas and suggestions, and we have also had over 75 individual and small group presentations about ways that we can continue to improve the quality of learning for all students and continue to move our public school system to be one of the top in the country, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville, your first supplementary question.

**Mr. Murphy:** Along with being too fast, they also expressed concern that the process fosters communities pitted against each other and ruining existing relationships, and it creates distraction for students and teachers when they should be focused on student achievement. There are many others but I only have 40 seconds here.

Will the minister have a good look at this process to make sure that these concerns with the process are properly addressed?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

All Members of the Legislative Assembly would agree that one of our most important pillars to prosperity is the quality of our public education, and I will reassure the Member from Alberton-Roseville that we're listening, we're paying attention.

I'm very pleased with the level of conversations. If we're really, truly serious about improving the quality of public education, for equitable access to all kinds of programs, we have to make sure that we have these conversations to make sure that we're moving in the right direction.

Very pleased and look forward to more conversations as we continue to shape the quality of our system.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville, your second supplementary question.

**Mr. Murphy:** There are also concerns with the number of people on the board and that none live in the West Prince area. There are concerns about the data not being accurate, which makes the projections not accurate.

Minister, will you assure me and the people that I represent that these concerns will be given the attention that they require?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

We are paying very close attention to the information. That's why we're having the public conversations, and I must say the conversations are very open, they're very transparent, and people are engaged.

But these aren't just issues in one part of the province. These are real realities all across the Province of Prince Edward Island. The whole mandate and the process, which is very consistent to every school board across this country, is to continue to improve the quality of learning, to make sure that we are

using the resources, and making sure that students that are crossing the stage this June in schools all across Prince Edward Island are getting the best quality education and are competing not only with the best in Canada but the best in the world, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

### Schools filled to capacity

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

My question today is also to the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Minister, I, too, have been following the school change policy and there's no secret that there are some schools in the Charlottetown area that are filled to capacity.

What are you as minister of education hoping to achieve with the school change policy in regard to the schools that are filled to capacity?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

As I alluded in a number of questions, the school change policy, which is the mandate of the Public Schools Branch, and as the minister who oversees the *Education Act*, I take that responsibility and very respectful of the mandate that they're doing.

I have one mission, and one mission is to make sure that we continue to provide quality, equitable access to the best programs, the best quality education, that we can provide as a province because I recognize the importance of the public education system and the prosperity and the future of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

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

Minister, during the consultations what concerns are you hearing from the people in overused schools?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

Part of the reality with schools that are seeing shifts in population over decades – because there hasn't really ever been a formal review of boundaries in school boards in this province for probably over 30 years. The issue that presents itself is the issue around class composition, class composition indicating that class sizes are overcapacity, the inability for teachers and students to have a positive learning environment.

The whole mandate of this is to look at ways that we can find better balance, better parity, and address the disproportion and distribution of students across the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, your second supplementary.

### **Students out of zone schools**

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

Minister, when my boys went to school, kids in the Lewis Point area were zoned to go to three schools. Some went to Spring Park for French Immersion, some went to West Royalty, and some went to West Kent.

How many students are out of zone and what are the reasons a student would go to school out of zone?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

We have about 1,000 students that are out of zone, but out of respect to the out of zone issue, there are issues that do require

students to be placed in other parts of the school.

One of the issues that we are going to be dealing with is trying to find better ways to find balance and parity in all the buildings that we have, but most importantly, the whole objective and the ultimate task is to continue to improve the quality of learning for students all across Prince Edward Island, and educators as well.

I am very committed as the minister, on behalf of all of my government colleagues, to make sure that we are moving markers and continue to be an equality education system that's on the move, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

### **Deleted government email accounts (further)**

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

Question to the Premier: Did you ever decide that you wanted to tell Islanders whose emails were deleted yet?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

As I did allude and I have committed to making sure that I bring those questions under advisement and bring them back to the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

But I must add I'm very pleased with the response to the Auditor General's report by our department who oversees records information management. We have demonstrated clear action to date. We're reviewing the *Archives and Records Act* with expectation that the revision will be ready for the spring. We've developed a draft action plan along with IT Shared Services staff to ensure compliance with the act. Steps have been also taken to increase records management training for all government employees.

I'm very pleased at the quickness and the response by all this staff to respond to these issues.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

### **Wes Sheridan emails**

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

I think one thing this government probably needs to learn and is going to probably learn real quickly is when you keep secrets they always come out, and you have a whole bunch of people working inside government there that are talking right now.

Let's move to the Minister of Finance because it falls under you and you have a lot of people talking right now.

Whatever happened to the emails of Wes Sheridan?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

We take the business of open and transparent government very seriously, and that's why, to my colleagues who have put together a very quick, very professional, and very action-oriented response to all the recommendations from the Auditor General – and I must say that I am extremely proud of my department who oversees record information management – to make sure that we send a message to Islanders that we take the work of the Auditor General very seriously.

I'm looking forward to presenting to this House the five-year strategy to demonstrate very clearly that we will continue to improve the ways and modernize how we keep records into the future, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

### **Melissa MacEachern emails**

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

I'm certainly dizzy with the runaround I'm getting. This government is quite deep into this cover up. The Premier is elbows deep. He won't answer any of my questions on what happened to Robert Ghiz's emails, what happened to West Sheridan's emails, what happened to Chris LeClair's emails. The Minister of Finance, it falls under him because it's his people who care for the servers. If they were deleted they had to be deleted out of his shop, and he won't answer it, though everybody in his department is talking about it. So he'd better answer it soon because it's going to get answered on the street for him.

Question again to the Minister of Finance: Whatever became of the emails of Melissa MacEachern?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

As I indicated, I will bring information forward to the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters. But I must add, once again, that to date the action and response to the recommendations has been swift, has been timely, has been professional, and we'll continue to move records information management in a direction that we're modernized to put us at a level with every province and jurisdiction across this country.

To date, we've got 10 new record retention schedules that were approved in October. We are exploring the adoption of electronic records management (Indistinct) and hoping a pilot this fall - this fall. A secondary provincial records centre is expected to open to respond and to professionalize the responsibilities and mandate that we have to oversee records information management, and we're committed to improving the policies and standards and enforce that legislation moving forward, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

### **Capital Budget bridge replacement**

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

I noticed in the Capital Budget – question to the minister of transportation – that next year’s budget is the same as last year’s budget for bridges. Just wondering how many bridges you’re looking to replace on Prince Edward Island next year?

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

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

Every year we do a review of all the bridges across, and assessments, to keep on top of setting priorities. From time to time there are other bridges that come up that are necessary to replace.

But in our Capital Budget we do maintain the same level going forward, and we will be talking about those as part of our Capital Budget discussions.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

#### **Out-of-service bridges**

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

To the minister of transportation: How many of these bridges are you planning on taking out of service next year?

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

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

At the present time there are a number of bridges that are restricted for use across Prince Edward Island. We actually just sent a notice out about the North Lake Bridge. But on a yearly basis we review those and make a determination as to what is the safest, and any other alternate route that is nearest we take that into account as well. We will continue to review the safety of all bridges on Prince Edward Island.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

#### **Grove Pine Road bridge**

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

To the minister of transportation. I know there was a bridge burnt on the Grove Pine Road that your department did not replace and this is a bridge that farmers used a lot, first responders used a lot. I noticed it’s not replaced yet.

Is your department planning on replacing the bridge on the Grove Pine Road?

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

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

When we look at those particular situations we do take into account the alternate route that is available to travel and the distance as well. When we make those determinations we take all that into account. If there’s another way to get there that is within a range that is not exorbitantly out of the way, then we also take that into account.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, final question.

#### **North Lake bridge**

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

If it was a bridge to Charlottetown, it would be built. But this is not. In rural PEI we have bridges for farmers, we have bridges for first-responders. Not for people who (Indistinct) Charlottetown.

Now that you mention it, minister of transportation, you mentioned the North Lake bridge, which I wasn’t going to bring up. Are you going to replace the North Lake bridge?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, let me tell you about the bridges in rural PEI that we have replaced this past year.

We did the gully bridge in Cascumpec area. We did the Cascumpec bridge which will be opening next week. We did a bridge down in Kelly’s Cross. We did an \$8 million bridge down in Souris.

We will continue to review the bridges as necessary across Prince Edward Island as

part of our bridge replacement structure program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[End of Question Period]