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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

THURSDAY, 1 DECEMBER 2016

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

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

Deleted government email accounts (further)

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

Over the past several days hon. members in the Assembly have been asking questions regarding records management.

When we received the Auditor General's report we acted quickly on the recommendations. This includes strengthening the way records are managed including electronic records. We've developed a three-year strategy to modernize records management. I will be speaking to this plan and tabling it later today.

When an employee leaves the public service there's a formal questioning. The IT Shared Services disable the email account. This is good business practice. Once an employee leaves there is no business need for them to access these accounts. At the same time it means the public is not mistakenly directing inquiries to former employees that would not receive a response.

Even though the accounts are disabled, following the requests the records are backed up and stored for an additional year. Following that time the records are overwritten. This is a common practice that allows for space in the server and means the government is no longer paying license fees for unused accounts.

As I stated, these actions follow a regular process as employees leave the system. Since 2007, when government implemented a system to track these actions, there have been 2,481 accounts disabled.

This summer IT Shared Services updated its protocol so that form requesting that account be disabled must include a signature stating that the employee's records must first have been properly filed in accordance with the public archives and records act under my ministry. This will help ensure that all the email accounts have been disabled, that

records have first been transferred or stored elsewhere.

The Auditor General did not name the former public servants whose accounts were disabled. If this information were to be released the appropriate means would be through the Auditor General.

The Auditor General's report points to a wider scope of work that needs to be done to modernize and enforce the ways records are stored, and I take that work very seriously.

Our new strategy will guide us in these efforts and I look forward to sharing the details of this work with members of this House.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Funds for agronomy initiative (further)

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

In response to questions yesterday from the Leader of the Third Party, I promised to take back some numbers with regards to the programs that we're happy to partnership with.

One of them being the Enhanced Agronomy program, which we do partner with the potato board and with Cavendish Farms. The idea of this, of course, is to improve the marketable yield, the profitability for the farmers and, of course, sustainability in the industry with regards to environment.

The actual numbers are, over a three-year period, 540,000, of which the department is funding 175,000 over the life of the project. This is through our SIGI fund. We're really pleased to partner there on that project.

Agriculture sector spending (further)

The other question was on supports to the potato sector in comparison with other sectors in agriculture.

It's interesting to note that our programs are funded not – in generic fashion, really. We don't give so many dollars to each

commodity being potatoes, livestock, beef, hogs, or whatever it might be, but basically in programs as they come forward. Most of it is done on the Agriculture Stewardship Program. The only exception for this, of course, is the organic development program which we put specific dollars into.

It's interesting to note, as well, of the \$33 million in our budget, 65% of it goes directly back to support the industry.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Radiation safety regulations (further)

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, in response to a question taken as notice by the Member from Stratford-Kinlock yesterday, I wish to table the following information in response to radiation safety regulations.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Compensation fund (further)

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

I'm very concerned. Today's weather is furthering the power outage issues in eastern PEI. We're back up to 8,000 without power.

Yesterday I asked the Premier if he would consider earmarking the new tax revenue from the *Premium Tax Act* to a compensation fund for Islanders impacted by the extended power outages over the last week. The Premier said he would take this under consideration.

Question to the Premier. You've had the night to sleep on it, no doubt in a warm bed with the lights on. Have you decided to act on this suggestion?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the power was out at our place yesterday.

I spoke earlier today with the mayor of Souris and the mayor of Georgetown and the CAO at Murray Harbour. Those communities are to be commended –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) mayor (Indistinct).

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) the people with no lights?

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) who's calling Bangor? The mayor of Bangor?

Premier MacLauchlan: – for the good work that they're doing, for the warming centres that have been opened there and in other communities –

Mr. LaVie: Who's calling Fortune?

Premier MacLauchlan: We're well aware of the situation in Fortune –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct). You don't have a clue.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and in other communities.

Mr. Speaker –

Speaker: Hon. members.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct).

Premier MacLauchlan: – we're very sympathetic and we're very aware of the hardship that people are going through, and we endeavour to keep working with those communities to make the best and to resolve the situation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The number is 147. One hundred and forty-seven communities in Kings County are without power.

As the hours without power have stretched into days the costs for Islanders are adding up. Losing a freezer full of food and running back and forth to the gas station to fill up

jerry cans are a big hit to absorb by these families, especially with the holiday season coming up and especially as the cost of living keeps going up.

Question to the Premier: Do you understand that this situation is adding a lot of stress and emotions and hitting the pocketbooks of Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Yes, indeed, Mr. Speaker, I do, indeed, understand that this is having a great impact throughout communities and in individual cases in eastern Prince Edward Island.

We're very appreciative of the efforts that are being made to respond to that situation including by the crews that are endeavouring to restore power under challenging circumstances.

We had a report first thing this morning that the homes without power were down to on the order of 1,800. I do understand that later this morning in a number of communities that had power from as long ago as Sunday that there were further outages.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

There are a lot of Islanders who have been out in the cold and dark for days, some for a better part of the week. They're hurting and they're looking for some leadership from somewhere.

Question to the Premier: Why do you seem so indifferent to the hardship many Islanders are facing and struggling with?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we are fully engaged on this issue.

Our officials with emergency measures have been, since the events first unfolded on Sunday, full-time attending to this issue in

collaboration with communities, with first responders, and with affected individuals.

We are far from indifferent. This is a serious situation. We understand that –

Mr. Myers: Have you toured the area?

Premier MacLauchlan: – people are affected and people are experiencing considerable –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) down and have a look.

Premier MacLauchlan: – difficulties. We are very interested –

Mr. Myers: Instead of hiding in Charlottetown.

Premier MacLauchlan: – to see the situation resolved in the Legislature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The people are looking for leadership. The new tax revenue from your insurance premium bill will put as much as \$1 million to the provincial coffers. Some kind of rebate for Islanders who have been in the dark for almost a week could help them with things and make a difficult time better.

Question to the Premier: Will you commit, today, to implementing a \$500 rebate for Islanders who have been without power for days as a result of this storm?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I said yesterday that we would consider if there were a need, or if there were measures that could be taken to respond to the suggestions that have been made.

We have, in the past, taken steps that I've asked our folks in emergency measures to review in terms of the administrative issues

that arose with that experience and what our experience may be. It may well be that the most useful way to proceed would be through a community organization that would be in a position to distribute funds where they're most needed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Souris Hospital chapel

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A question to the health minister: Minister of health, can you tell me if the chapel at the Souris Hospital is going to be closed?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I can inform the hon. member the chapel is not going to be closed, but we are doing some renovations at the Souris Hospital to better accommodate patient care and to allow more of a multipurpose use of what was the chapel area so that we can provide a better sense of accommodations for restorative care at that location.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another question to the minister of health: Who ordered this renovation to be done?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: I wouldn't know that specifically, Mr. Speaker, but I can find that out for the hon. member.

But I would assume it would be the administrator of the facility in, once again, trying to accommodate patients and the delivery of good, solid restorative care to the patients of the Souris Hospital. It's just, really, a renovation to the facility, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the minister of health: Is this happening in any other hospitals across PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I would reiterate that we do renovations in all our hospitals periodically to try to better accommodate staff, to better accommodate patients.

As far as restorative care, restorative care is a service that is provided, I know, at Community Hospital in O'Leary, Souris, and I think there probably are a number of other facilities that we provide that as well. In past, it was felt that the chapel was somewhat underutilized and this is a way to expand the service, to expand patient safety, and for better utilization of that facility for restorative care, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I take offence that the chapel was underutilized. I've used that chapel myself. We have palliative care at the Souris Hospital and families do use that chapel, so I take offence of that being underutilized.

Minister of health: Will you assure the people in District 1 that that chapel will remain in the Souris Hospital?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, just to reiterate, I guess when I was referring to the chapel being underutilized, all of the space that was assigned to the chapel wasn't utilized.

So we are still going to be having a chapel. The new renovations will accommodate many multipurposes to be used at that facility including services like for chapel-type services, as well as there will be a space that will be adjacent to the multipurpose room that can be used specifically for smaller chapel experiences for religious purposes.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Souris walk-in clinics

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A question to the minister of health. The Souris walk-in clinics have recently been closed again under this government.

Minister of health: Can you explain why the walk-in clinics in Souris continue to close?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I'd probably have to get a bit more specifics from my department on that.

I mean, there are many reasons. Sometimes it is staffing issues, sometimes it's utilization again as well, but I'll get back to the hon. member with more specifics to the Souris walk-in clinic.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll give him an update on it myself. Our walk-ins did close and he said staffing issues. The doctor in Souris offered his free services to have the walk-in clinic open. Free. He wouldn't charge you. Why did you close the walk-in clinics in Souris?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I have to say I don't have the specifics of the Souris walk-in clinic, but I'd be happy to get back to the hon. member with that information.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When there are 3,000 people up there with no doctor and no walk-in clinic I would be assured that the minister would be aware of this situation.

Not only did the doctor offer his free services, minister, the nursing staff and the mid staff offered their time for free services. Why did you allow the walk-in clinics to close at Souris Hospital?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, once again I said I'll get back on more of the specifics on Souris in that particular regard.

But I will say I am aware that we've just we have just attracted a new physician, Dr. Verdejo, who'll be practicing in that area. We have three doctors that are practicing out of the Souris facility.

I was down there recently, and just added new diagnostic imaging services that will be there, expanding the equipment and modernizing it. I think the people of Kings County will be well pleased with the services. We have also added, once again, more ambulance services there, and they have actually now some of the best response times of ambulances in the province, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Souris fourth doctor

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now that the minister brought it up about the three doctors, Premier, you came into Souris, you promised four doctors. You just added a complement of one more doctor in Montague for 16,000 people. You promised us four doctors for 7,000 people.

Premier: When is that fourth doctor coming to Souris?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, we do have a complement of 12 physicians in Kings County to try to recruit for.

We do have some vacancies, and we will continue with the recruiting and the retention to encourage physicians to look at the Souris area, as well as anywhere in

Kings County, or to fulfill any of the vacancies in Prince Edward Island.

I am quite confident that we will achieve those goals in the future, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Medical specialists

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One issue I hear about all the time from my constituents is about the long wait times to see medical specialists. This question is for the minister of health. I know every MLA hears about the long wait times.

Minister: Why are we turning away medical specialists?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I would say we're not turning away medical specialists in this province.

We have about 250 physicians that are practicing here in Prince Edward Island and we, once again – but we do want to make sure that any of the physicians that are practicing here in Prince Edward Island meet the prerequisites of the positions that they're applying for, especially specialty positions, as well as – I also want to reiterate that the college of physicians is the regulatory organization that affirms the qualifications of any of our physicians, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Retention of GI specialist

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, I beg to differ.

There was a GI specialist that was recently turned away. I mean, we hear time and time again about the difficulty of recruiting and retaining medical specialists. Wait times drag on for months and even years for some specialties.

A question for the minister of health: Knowing how long the wait times for

specialists are, why did your department go to such lengths to discourage GI specialist Dr. Khan from being retained?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, we have actually 17 internal medicine positions here in Prince Edward Island, of which there's five at Prince County Hospital and 12 at the QEH.

We are short one gastroenterologist position of which we have specific prerequisites of the two gastrointestinal positions here in this province. We want to make sure that they are up to speed in providing all the competent services that the patients would expect here in Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, a GI, or a gastroenterologist, specializes in the function and diseases of the whole gastrointestinal tract, from the esophagus and the stomach right through the pancreas and the liver and everything in between.

Many Islanders need the help of a GI specialist, and Dr. Khan's patients want to know where they will get help since we are losing Dr. Khan to another province.

Question for the minister: If Dr. Khan provided top-quality health care and indeed wanted to work here permanently, then why didn't your department keep him?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, back in 2012 we did have one gastroenterologist position here in Prince Edward Island.

When a request was made to the Physician Resource Planning Committee for a second gastrointestinal physician here it was granted, but it was also granted that both positions have specific training called ERCP – don't ask me to pronounce that, the words are pretty long, but – and it was felt that that training should be provided in both positions. It's a prerequisite.

The doctor in question was a locum physician. He was hired on a short-term basis. It was extended. I can assure all the people that were going to Dr. Khan that we will have other locum services in the short-term and hopefully a full-time position in the long-term.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You say that Dr. Khan needed ERCP training, and your department publicly stated that the reason for Dr. Khan's departure was that he didn't pursue specialized training in this area. This statement was strongly rejected by the head of internal medicine at the QEH. In fact, to quote what was said, and it may be ruled unparliamentary so I apologize in advance, Dr. Khan's boss called your department's public statement: "...a bold-faced lie."

Speaker: That is unparliamentary language.

Mr. Trivers: That's a quote, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the minister –

Speaker: (Indistinct) withdraw this statement (Indistinct).

HW re: Dr. Rajal Khan

Mr. Trivers: I'll withdraw the statement, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the minister: Why did your department publicly misrepresent the facts around Dr. Khan's departure?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: I would take some offence to the comment that our department has misrepresented the facts, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is that particular doctor in question was offered a locum position and was notified that to get a full-time position, for that to be filled, they would have to have this ERCP training.

We did extend that individual a little bit longer. I think the person is still practicing. I

believe sometime mid-December that he will be leaving, and we will have another locum – we're already in the process of confirming that – that does have ERCP training, and that is because if you – many Islanders were going off-Island to get that service provided.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we hear from the head of internal medicine at the QEH, language like a bold-faced (Indistinct) or something of that nature, this is very strong language and the minister must take responsibility.

Now, we want to know: Did you make the final call to mislead Islanders about the facts behind Dr. Khan's departure? Was that you?

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Speaker: Hon. member, that's twice you've said "mislead." Mislead means lie, so withdraw that statement.

Mr. Trivers: I will, reluctantly, withdraw that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Myers: You think that's the worst that you fellas ever heard over there?

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct).

Mr. Myers: Oh, please (Indistinct).

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can assure Islanders and I can assure this House it's my responsibility as minister to make sure that Islanders are receiving appropriate care that's of the highest quality and safety measures that are in place. We want to make sure that the people that are working on Islanders for their health care needs, Mr. Speaker –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)!

Mr. Henderson: – are receiving –

Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. Henderson: All the proper procedures and treatment that is available, Mr. Speaker.

With that, in this particular case, the physician recruiting committee identified that ERCP training was a prerequisite for that particular position, and it was to reduce the amount of Islanders that were going off-province to get those particular services.

With that, I'm quite confident that we will replace that and Islanders will get proper care.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

HW management issue

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to follow up on what the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald was just saying.

Disturbing news report this morning about the loss of one of our two gastroenterologists on PEI has left many Islanders with a queasy feeling in their stomach. The convoluted and sad story reveals one thing, however, very clearly. When it comes to delivering health care services, PEI has a systemic management crisis.

When a department manager in Health and Wellness is accusing upper-level bosses in Health PEI of what he said –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – it's impossible to come to any other conclusion.

A question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: What will you do to address this acute management issue?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, it may not be a matter of what we will do, but it's what we've already done.

In fact, actually, we have made some changes in our management structure at the situation where one particular doctor, Dr. Dada, is not with us anymore and we have now Dr. Tom Dorran is in charge of medical affairs. Hopefully things will continue to evolve and we'll only see more improvement of services here in Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Retention of doctors

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

The loss of experienced doctors is traumatic for patients, but it's also extremely costly to the health services. Our province's retention of newcomers is the lowest in Canada, and it appears that this inability to entice people to become permanent residents of Prince Edward Island extends, too, to medical personnel.

Minister, we know that much effort and money is expended on recruitment of new doctors to PEI, but what does your department do to make sure that these doctors who we do attract here are encouraged to stay?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, once again, when we are in the process of recruiting and retaining high-end professionals here to the Province of Prince Edward Island we do work with the newcomers association, we do work with Workforce and Advanced Learning, to make sure that they comply and meet all of the procedures to actually work here in this province.

I'm quite proud to say that we've, once again, done a great job in attracting physicians. We have more physicians practicing here in Prince Edward Island than for some time, and we're also filling vacancies that are in the specialty field which are very difficult to recruit for.

We will make sure that any Islanders that are receiving services in gastroenterology will be followed up with a locum, once

again, and we'll continue on with hopefully recruiting a position in the long term.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Family doctor access

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

Of course, gastroenterology is not the only medical field on PEI where recruitment and retention are problems. An hour before the House opened today we heard that the PEI family doctor of the year, Garth Slys, is leaving Prince Edward Island. As we know from earlier questions, we have a deficit of family doctors in Souris. We have a deficit of family doctors all across the Island.

Can the minister tell this House when every single Islander can expect to have access to a family doctor?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Once again, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. member's question, we do have some vacancies on Prince Edward Island, but, once again, we have more doctors practicing.

We have continued to fill vacancies as doctors retire and as doctors choose other locations to practice. That's their prerogative.

But once again, it's to make sure that the physicians that we are filling these positions with do have all the proper prerequisites and competencies that Islanders would expect, and that's a role that we work with with the medical society, as well as the college of physicians, to make sure that we're giving the highest quality of health care in this province, Mr. Speaker.

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

Post-secondary students and EI

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is for the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning. Hard-working Island students are looking for help

to better themselves in post-secondary education, and over this past summer and fall I spoke with the minister extensively about helping to ease the burden of these educational costs by offering the ability to collect EI while attending post-secondary school for university students.

Would the minister update the House today on our conversation?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That was a great question, and I want to thank the member for his work in this area.

One thing that the Workforce and Advanced Learning want to do – and all of government – is want to give every opportunity for everyone that wants to get a higher education on Prince Edward Island. People that have entered the workforce to get experience, and then later on want to go back to university, as long as they're eligible for EI we will work with that student in order to see if they can continue to collect EI while they're taking their studies.

We are committed to helping each and every person on Prince Edward Island that wants to advance their skills and trades.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's great news. It's great that the minister not only takes suggestions but he acts upon them.

Minister, I would just like to ask you a question. How do these students become eligible for this program? Because in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick they have it implemented for third- and fourth-year students attending university.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, each and every province has an ability to assist university students in collecting unemployment insurance while they are attending university. I don't know why it wasn't done before, but through the smart efforts of the member from Tignish we have investigated it, and we are working with the staff at the LMDA program in order to see how we can implement this as fast as possible.

Thank you.

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

Food Tax Credit (further)

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries. Minister, yesterday during my member's statement I spoke about the generosity of farmers and fishers who donate product to our local food banks. As you're aware, a number of provinces including Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia have a fresh food tax credit in place, and I posed a similar question on a food tax credit for Prince Edward Island during the spring session.

Will you update the House on the development of the fresh food tax credit for our province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

An excellent question and an excellent champion for this topic. The Member of Charlottetown-Lewis Point did raise this I guess about a year ago and our department took it under advisement, and we are working on it very closely with some of the other provinces available.

We did find out in our research that there is a tax credit available from registered charities such as the food bank, things like that. If a farmer or fisher donates food to the food bank they can receive a tax credit for that and claim it on their tax return.

We are looking and working on the fresh food tax credit and we hope to have that in place, but right now we're meeting with interested parties and hope to have that legislation soon.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, you talk about your department working on the development of the fresh food tax credit and I've been speaking about this, as you said, for about a year. What is the timeline for the introduction of this fresh food tax credit?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

We have two of our staff that are working on this, putting a considerable amount of time into this very topic. We are working with the department of education, department of health, because they are very important parts to it as well because we want quality food in our health care system and also in our school system.

We think this is perhaps one of the most exciting pieces of legislation we'll be bringing forward. I know it certainly is of great interest to ourselves and to the other members in Cabinet. The plan right now is to have this legislation in place by 2018.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Deleted government email accounts (further)

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday the Premier admitted that he does not know the name of the senior government official who deleted the emails contravening the Criminal Code of Canada.

Premier, the obvious question is: Why have you not made it your priority to find out?

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

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

Today I responded to the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters. I must add, the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters worked in IT Shared Services before he moved to public life. Very aware of process. Since 2007 there's been approximately 5,000 email accounts that have been disabled and there's a process around that. I look forward to tabling the strategy in response to the Auditor General's report, Mr. Speaker.

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

Egaming briefing

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister might be surprised to find out that in IT lots of things happen. I would have no idea what goes on with email service because I was a computer programmer and a data analyst for the province and never, ever would be near a server, ever. So you learned something today.

The Premier here professes to work 18 hours a day, yet he can't be bothered to uncover the names of whose emails were deleted.

Question to the Premier: How have you failed to be briefed on this vital link of the egaming deletion scandal?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the question I've been asked on a number of occasions has been: Do I know the names or will I reveal names of public servants whose email accounts have been disabled?

As the minister –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) was deleted (Indistinct), not disabled.

Premier MacLauchlan: Disabled. As the minister has –

Mr. Trivers: It was deleted, not disabled. Big difference.

Premier MacLauchlan: – told us today there have been in the order of 5,000 accounts disabled going back to 2007.

Mr. Trivers: Disabled is not (Indistinct) question. Deleted. I noticed that when the response came (Indistinct).

Premier MacLauchlan: This is the normal work of government, Mr. Speaker, and it's not my view of my role as Premier to stand in the House and reveal the names of public servants who –

Mr. Trivers: Don't try and (Indistinct). We understand the difference between disabled and deleted.

Speaker: Hon. member.

Premier MacLauchlan: It's not my view of my role as Premier, Mr. Speaker, nor of the role of this House to stand here and reveal the names of public servants –

Mr. Trivers: Sure it is. Absolutely it is

Premier MacLauchlan: – who've done the proper thing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Twenty-two months you've been in office, Mr. Premier. Why in 22 months have you decided that you don't want to know whose email accounts were deleted in the egaming scandal?

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

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

As I indicated at the start of Question Period, there is a process that IT Shared Services has. As the Minister of Education,

Early Learning and Culture, I have the Provincial Archives and Records Office, which provides oversight with the legislation across all government.

Very pleased to acknowledge the work of IT Shared Services. When any of those 5,000 employees decide to retire or leave government that information is archived. There's an application process in July. IT Shared Services have put in oversight with the signature and that information, the actual email account is –

Mr. Trivers: Deleted. Deleted.

Mr. Currie: – disabled. Actually, for 12 months following, all that information is stored.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier's failed to learn all the facts of the email deletion scandal (Indistinct) could have broken the Criminal Code of Canada.

However, in the first sitting day this fall the Premier volunteered the information that it was two senior officials, and he spoke about the time period which he believed it happened in.

Question to the Premier: How did you come to learn this, but not the names of the people whose accounts were deleted?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, that was the first sitting day, as the hon. member has noted, and I may have been a little rusty in accepting the premise of the question.

I believe what I said is that it was my impression that there were two senior people. I gained that impression from reading the Auditor General's report. I'd encourage all members to read it, and to bear in mind that that report was tabled on the 5th of October, and here we are today as a government, seven weeks later, coming forward with a three-year plan with resources and with a program and a policy to

build the culture and to set in place the practices that will respond to the issues raised by the Auditor General.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Deleted government email accounts (further)

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Somebody told the Auditor General that two email accounts of senior government officials were deleted. She, in turn, would have reported her findings back to government about the detail of (Indistinct) correspondence. Both of these happen to be under this Premier because he ordered the audit and the deletions all happened in his office. Then the auditor had to report back to Cabinet.

Question to the Premier: Why do you continue to cling to this fantasy that you don't know who deleted the emails? –

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

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

I want to add to the line of questions. Back in 2007, when I was part of the government that did come in, during that summer we were quick to initiate a tracking system to start documenting the number of disabled email accounts. Since that, there's been over approximately 5,000.

As I've said numerous times, I am the minister that provides oversight for how records management is conducted all across the province. As I indicated, I take that work very seriously.

But I also want to add, too, that we will be bringing forward investments and recommendations to modernize the way we do our business in records information management.

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

Email retention time

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to clarify on this little game that's being played today. The Auditor General said: deleted. We're not talking about disabled email accounts, we're talking about deleted. You all know whose were deleted, every single one of you.

We began questioning this government yesterday on the guidelines for email records. This Premier reissued the rulebook in March 2015. Then, he issued it a second time in March 2016. I'll table both of them today.

These guidelines state: Email records must be scheduled and retained for an appropriate period of time.

How long were the senior officials supposed to keep their egaming emails for?

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

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

As I did share to the House, since 2007 approximately 5,000 employees who have retired or left government have respected the process and policy, which is to sign application for IT Shared Services to delete, disable, the email account, but most importantly, that their records are kept for a 12-month period before they're overwritten by IT Shared Services which is a very natural process.

I look forward – and I take the work and the recommendations of the Auditor General very seriously.

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

Email records management and Premier's office

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I stated, I'm going to table the two rulebooks, the ones that the Premier has changed twice since he's been in government. In 2007, since 2007, all you

fellows have been operating under these guidelines. This all happened, all these deletions happened, under the guidelines that your government created.

Question to the Premier about these books: Why is the Premier's office not found in either copy of these two rulebooks for email records management?

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

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

I did read the Auditor General's report because I am the minister responsible for Education, Early Learning and Culture and I do have the responsibility of records information management.

I have been clearly directed by the Auditor General – who I take that work very seriously, and that responsibility to respond to the recommendations. But if you read the Auditor General in respect to this discussion, she refers to the word 'to removed' not deleted, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess I'll understand from the minister over there that that and disabled are the same word. Removed and disabled are now the same word. You should work for Webster's Dictionary. You may reinvent the whole entire English language for us right here this afternoon.

Destruction order re: emails (further)

Question again to the Premier: Premier, why have you failed to bring back and table the destruction order approved by government to delete the egaming emails?

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

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

As I indicated, being a Cabinet minister for 10 years in government I'm very familiar

with the important work that the Auditor General does and the quality of her staff.

I also take those recommendations over the course of those 10 years, and my role as minister, very seriously.

We will be looking at existing legislation, policies, and procedures. We'll be hiring full-time staff positions to be hired to facilitate departmental records management compliance. All government staff will be trained. Currently, we're doing assessments on how government departments are performing. We'll have sufficient capacity and growth with secondary site storage.

We are very committed to bringing records information management into the 21st century. We're very serious about that.

I'll be tabling that document and that strategy very shortly, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, your final question.

Deleted government email accounts (further)

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Since 2007 you fellows have had rules, and we all know what happens when Liberals have rules. They apply to everyone but them. That's exactly what happened in this email deletion scandal.

The Auditor General said deleted, by the way – correction – and I find it hard to believe that you guys think that the public actually believes that none of you know whose emails were deleted.

Question to the Premier. Once and for all, come clean with Islanders. Whose emails were deleted?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite asked yesterday about what he referred to as destruction orders, and I have taken that under advisement.

That is dealt with by a committee under the *Archives and Records Act*. And I've endeavoured to set in motion the inquiries

that would lead to that coming back to the House.

I have given a response to the question about naming names. Those are in the Auditor General's report. I don't speak for the Auditor General, but I am happy to speak – just gotten word from Maritime Electric that thousands of households have had their electricity restored throughout Prince Edward Island, and notably in Kings County, since Question Period started, so we accomplished something in the last 60 minutes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]