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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

WEDNESDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2016

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Federal funding for seniors' health care

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

On Friday the Premier will be travelling to Ottawa with other premiers to discuss health care funding with the prime minister. We have unique health challenges here in PEI due to our size and scale compared to other provinces. Our seniors make up a large percentage of our population.

Question to the Premier: What extra funding for seniors' health care services for Prince Edward Island will you be asking for?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question, it's very much on our minds.

We go through to the First Ministers' meeting which will start tomorrow evening. The premiers have been advocating, going back several meetings of the Council of the Federation, to have this matter brought to the First Ministers' table. We're pleased that the prime minister has now agreed that on Friday evening over dinner there'll be two hours devoted to this subject.

The question of an aging population (Indistinct) the most acute part of our medical care needs, as well as right through to home care and community care, is very much part of the province's advocacy as we look forward to speaking with the federal government and our provincial territorial partners about this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Federal funding for mental health and addictions

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

I never heard anything in there that actually says what you're going to be asking for, Premier. The federal government has put extra money on the table targeted for home care, and mental health and addictions. These are two very important areas of need to Islanders where money is required.

Question to the Premier: Are you prepared to accept new federal health care funding for mental health and addictions even if there are strings attached?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our first concern is really for the quantum of the funds. When we look at our total spending on health now, upwards of \$650 million, closer to \$670 million, and where the pressures are and where we're seeing them in the current year, it's quite evident that there are pressures both with respect to the changing demographics or the advancing age of our population and in the growing incidence of mental health issues.

Those are both issues of prime concern to the province. The amount of money that to date has been offered by the federal government would be, in our view, insufficient when it is spread across the country so we're looking first for more money.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Manor replacement and infrastructure funding

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

I think there are extreme pressures on our seniors and I think we're hearing of that. We see in the Capital Budget why the federal government might want strings attached. Manors in Tyne Valley and Montague getting bumped for the Cornwall bypass. A replacement for the Hillsborough Hospital is

not even on the horizon. When the time came again to delay the manor replacements in Tyne Valley and Montague, your government's excuse was that the federal cost-sharing was being exploited for other projects.

Questions for the Premier: Will you be insisting that the prime minister add manor replacements to the infrastructure funding available to the province?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, on the question of infrastructure, notably as regards the manors, this has been an active part of our conversation with the federal government going back some time, and it's as we look to refine and be precise about what is covered by references to social infrastructure.

Let me go back on the point about the health care funding, to give a more complete answer on that – or to pursue it in the amount of time that's available in QP. The federal government, under the plan that was put in place by the previous government, would see the funding reduced from 6% to 3% increase effective in March 2017. Our very clear objective is on that aspect, to indicate together as provinces and territories that that 3% increase is insufficient.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

That was the excuse your government gave to delaying the manor replacements. Of course Islanders know that the real reason was the Cornwall bypass which took money. But waiting for federal cost-sharing was the excuse. Getting the prime minister to validate your excuse I think should be a big priority.

Question to the Premier: Why should people in Montague and Tyne Valley believe your excuses on more manor delays if you won't raise the issue with the prime minister?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the prime minister and the federal government are well aware of our view on the manors and on social infrastructure.

Let me say that the reason why we are pursuing this is in the interest of the provincial taxpayer. If we can have a cost sharing on these important facilities, then it's very much in the interest of Islanders from tip to tip, and I should think people on all sides of this House, that we pursue that federal funding.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Child care funds

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Child care is expensive and it's often a barrier to good economic participation, especially for young single parents.

Question to Minister of Family and Human Services: Has the minister restored the \$700,000 that's been cut from your budget over the last few years?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The child care subsidy program that my department administers is a very valuable support program to low- to moderate-income Islanders all across Prince Edward Island, and currently the program is under review. We have a dedicated staff member looking at the program and we're hoping to have some more information to bring back to the House within the next couple of months.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The \$700,000 that was cut from your budget for child care subsidy and the \$300,000 that this government planned and promised

during the last election, and has not delivered on, would go a long way for Island families to provide good quality child care for their children this winter.

Mr. LaVie: And for Christmas, they need a Christmas. Every child needs a Christmas.

Ms. Compton: Why are you doing the opposite of what you promised during the last election campaign?

Mr. LaVie: Every child deserves a Christmas.

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is committed to our campaign or our platform promise which would be to increase the child care subsidy.

However, as it was determined by the opposition or agreed by the opposition last year, it wasn't just the budget line that needed to be adjusted, the whole program needed to be looked at. We are taking a comprehensive look at the whole program and increasing if necessary, and reduce or adjusting thresholds if necessary.

But the whole program is being looked at because we are committed to giving the best service to Islanders that need it most when they need it most, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Caring for children –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)!

Ms. Compton: – is really important and does matter, but we –

Speaker: Hon. member –

Ms. Compton: I'm going to shift gears a little bit.

Child protection legislation review

For a few months now your department has been working on the review of the *Child*

Protection Act. The protection act, it's very important legislation. This review should be a big priority for your department. The consultations on this review wrapped up in late summer. It's now December and the review hasn't been released. What's causing the delay?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the minister responsible for child protection on Prince Edward Island, I take this file very seriously. Protecting a child's best interest is everyone's responsibility. It's government's responsibility, it's a community's responsibility, and it is individuals' responsibility.

The consultation process took place over 34 – we had 34 consultations across all municipalities over the fall of last year or the spring of last year, and a great deal of information did come out of those consultations. We heard from frontline workers. We heard from families. We heard from children that have been in the system.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Ms. Mundy: All of that information has been compiled, it will be released –

An Hon. Member: Time!

An Hon. Member: Answer!

Ms. Mundy: – in the report hopefully sometime in the New Year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. members, I am watching my watch and I realize – but I'll control it from here, members, okay?

An Hon. Member: He's in charge.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: My clock said 52 seconds (Indistinct).

Child protection legislation review and child advocate

Ms. Compton: It's our understanding that the idea of a child advocate was a hot topic during the discussion. Is that why the release of the *Child Protection Act* review is being delayed? Because the reporting that frontline workers gave to you, who also want a child advocate, that decision would displease the Premier? Is that why you're delaying this?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government is committed to continuing how to learn, how to keep children safe, safe from parental harm on Prince Edward Island. We had rich, fulsome discussions with our population, with communities, as I said, from one tip to the other. We received a great deal of information and I am looking forward as minister to be able to bring those recommendations to the House as soon as they are ready, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Home reno program spending

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Child care is very important, the *Child Protection Act* is very important, but it's also very important that children have a nice, warm, safe roof over their head. One point one million dollars was budgeted for home reno program last year. We FOIPPed that request from our office and it revealed that \$833,000 was spent, a shortfall of a quarter of a million dollars.

Why did your department under spend the budget for home reno program by \$267,000 when the need and the demand is so high?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Is the hon. member referring to this current fiscal year?

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

Ms. Compton: The year before this budget that we're in now. Not the budget year we're in now, the one before, \$1.1 million.

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will take that under advisement and get back to you with an answer.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In April this minister stood up and told the House that the budget for the home reno program this year was going to be \$1.35 million. A FOIPP request from our office shows that, to date, less than \$47,000 of that budget has been spent, a shortfall of \$1.3 million.

Why is your department under-spending the budget for home reno programs again this year when the need and demand is so high?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are very aware of how important housing is on Prince Edward Island. I think yesterday or the day before I went through all of the programs that we have for housing on Prince Edward Island.

As for the PEI home repair program, we are still receiving quotes from many of our clients and we're working very closely with the people that did put in requests. The money has not been spent because the work has not yet been performed. But we are committed to spending the money in the budget for home repair programs for those Islanders that need it most to help them stay in their homes, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The data that our office reviewed showed that 97 files were open and approved with no money flowing. Perhaps they should talk to the Premier who seems to have an inside track on getting cheques cut immediately.

Have you been told to turn off the taps on home reno programs to pad the budget, just like the last two ministers of your department?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On the contrary, we have only increased the budgets to our home renovation programs. For instance, on our rent supplements we created 75 new rent supplements through investments in affordable housing agreement. That's 257 clients that will receive rent supplements.

Our PEI home repair program, we went from initially 75 to about 240 that we are helping, so that's additional. This year, \$250,000 invested into that program. Seniors Safe @ Home Program, again, an increase by \$125,000 to the budget line, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, minister.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Specialist and physician complement

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As of late there's been a fair amount of media coverage over the past couple of weeks about medical professionals leaving PEI. In fact, I spent last night and this morning going through the long list of specialist vacancies in this province, and frankly it's quite disturbing.

Question to the minister of health: Minister, why are you failing to ensure that your

government meets its full complement of specialists and physicians for Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note that the member opposite is talking about a long list.

The long list of specialist vacancies is about nine. I'm sure, once again, I think as a department and as minister, we'd like to see that to zero, and we continue to work very hard on recruiting and retaining the specialists here to provide good quality health care services to Islanders, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This minister's math is about as good as the finance minister's. I look at the list and it's much longer than nine.

This list includes the need for two anesthesiologists, two gastroenterologists, a hospitalist, medical oncologist or hematologist, and a obstetric/gynecologist, just to name a few.

Again to the minister. This is unacceptable. Please explain to this House why you were failing to recruit specialists to our province.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, once again, I'm not sure where the hon. member is getting that list.

I'm assuming it may be an old list, because I know for sure we have a full complement of OBGYNs here in this province.

But yes, we do have nine vacancies that we are trying to recruit for, and obviously in the news lately there was an issue about a gastroenterologist. That's a vacancy. We do have a couple of oncologist positions that will be coming up vacant. We have one currently right now that we're trying to fill for. We do have people that are already signed up, as in the oncologist situation, that

will be coming in the summer of 2017, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

Where I got this list from is actually Health PEI's website, so I have to, I guess, question whether or not your website's up to speed because certainly the minister's not.

Again, the physician list also includes the need for three psychiatrists. We're supposed to have a complement of 15. We currently are short three. A radiologist, an emergency medicine physician, and a physician consultant for addictions services.

Again to the minister: Why are so many medical professionals leaving PEI under your government?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I will say that the hon. member did have one accurate fact in his statements there, that we do have a complement of 15 positions that are dealing with our mental health and psychiatry division.

But I might add also, one of those positions is on maternity leave, so once again we don't fill a maternity leave situation. We are obliged to support our staff that have situations like that, and that person will be returning once their maternity leave is over. But we do have some vacancies in that section. We have currently 13.4 full-time equivalent positions working in psychiatry and mental health in this province, so with the one maternity leave, we really only have one position that we're trying to recruit for, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, this province also has a list of 33 vacancies for allied health professionals including two psychologists, a community mental health social worker, a psychologist,

speech-language pathologist, (Indistinct) for provincial mental health and addictions, a social services worker, audiologist, respiratory therapist, and occupational therapists. Again, the list goes on and on, and this is certainly a disgrace.

Again to the minister: What is your plan to address this phenomenal failure of your recruitment process, minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, once a position is posted it is open for competition for anyone who's interested in applying to those particular positions.

The hon. member is right. I do see – and it is of concern to see the amount of vacancies in some of the health profession situations that we have here in this province.

But I think the hon. member needs to focus on maybe some of the more positive attributes of what we're dealing about here. We tend to focus on the 10 vacancies that we don't have, but yet we should be focusing on the 250 physicians that we have practicing in this province, which is an all-time high of services that we are providing here from our medical professionals.

But I also note that we, once again, have more RCWs, more RNs, practice in this province than we've had in the past, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again to the minister. Minister, I'm hearing from staff directly within your department that you were ordered by the Premier to cut \$25 million from your budget. Is that why you were forcing these medical professionals to leave PEI while failing to recruit specialists and physicians to serve Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I would sort of reiterate to the hon. member, actually the

Department of Health and Wellness and Health PEI's budget was not cut, it was increased, in fact, increased about 3%.

We have significant increases in our budget. When it comes to hiring staff and compensating staff, once again, we want to respect our staff to the fullest by providing them the best remuneration possible.

But we are bound by Master Agreements that outline the remuneration that our professionals receive. Once again, we are in negotiations with a number of our organizations out there, the medical society being one. I'm quite confident that we'll come to a successful conclusion and continue to compensate our staff fairly, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

WCB concerns

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

On November 25th I asked the Premier about concerns with the Workers Compensation Board, to which he replied that I should present any concerns I may have to this House.

I have with me today a letter from John MacLean to the Premier, sent to premier@gov.pe.ca, and also forward to the Premier's office via MP Lawrence MacAulay's office. These are dated November 2015 and December 2015, so the Premier can hardly say that he has not been informed on issues with WCB.

Mr. MacLean also informed me that he attempted to take up the Premier's often-repeated open door policy to discuss his concerns. After several months staff in the Premier's office finally told John that there would be no meeting.

Question to the Premier: Why did you refuse to meet with a concerned Islander about problems in one of your portfolios?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it's essential to the workers compensation

regime and to the autonomy of the Workers Compensation Board as an arm's length agency of government, that they operate with a CEO, with a board, with officials.

While I am the minister reporting to the House on the work of the Workers Compensation Board, it would be not in order for me to start meeting with individual clients who are approaching me about concerns they have about their claims.

It has to do with the autonomy of the Workers Compensation Board, Mr. Speaker.

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

Meetings with Premier

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

Mr. MacLean is not the only one who has found the Premier's door to be closed rather than open.

I have also heard from the National Farmers Union, from the Coalition for the Protection of PEI Water, and many others, that they were also unable to get meetings with the Premier despite repeated requests.

Question to the Premier: To whom is your door open?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it's my practice, when people approach the Premier's Office, that they're approaching government and where they need to speak to the people that can help them the most.

Indeed, we do get approaches from people who have concerns about workers compensation, and it's our practice to ensure that they are in touch with the Workers Compensation Board. In the case of the National Farmers Union, their leadership has met directly with the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, with the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, and we may well have a further meeting with the three of us with them.

I think it has to be very clear and I think the House should appreciate, and I think the House would mind, if the Premier started

meeting with everybody and doing the work of the whole of government because it doesn't work that way, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Meeting re: electoral reform

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

Another issue in which we've seen a similar pattern emerge, of course, is electoral reform.

Given the Premier's not-so-open door policy and the fact that government seems to have abandoned its motion for the not-so-binding referendum, will the Premier commit to either completing the debate on Motion No. 80 before we adjourn for the holidays in this House or making himself available to meet the leaders of the proportional representation campaign team to find a common solution to electoral reform?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm under the understanding that that matter is still before the House, and the House has got a ways to go, so I'm sure that we'll have an opportunity, among the 27 of us here in the House, to see what is the best way forward.

But as far as an open door on that one, we've made it very clear that there'll be a referendum with MMP on the ballot and that we recognize the importance of the plebiscite.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Wait time for long-term care beds in West Prince

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've been contacted by several families in my area regarding the long wait times for long-term care beds.

My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Minister, are you aware of these long wait times and do you have a number of how many individuals are awaiting long-term care beds in the West Prince area?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, we are aware that we have wait times in this province when it comes to people, who are assessed requiring long-term care needs. We have actually 1,141 long-term care beds that are designated in this province, and it just depends on where the situation is where an individual is willing to go.

Currently, the answer to that question to the hon. member is there are 20 people awaiting long-term care in the West Prince area, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, thank you for that.

What is your department doing to try to relieve some of that waiting time for these residents of the West Prince area?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge that the wait times are a little longer than people would like.

I would also emphasize that wait times are based on the most urgent. Sometimes people can be on a list for some time where somebody is a more urgent case, then they may have to come off the list fairly quickly and be accommodated.

Our department is currently undergoing a review of a continuum of care for long-term care in this province. We're trying to get a better sense of where beds should be designated, how many beds should be in the system, how do we assess individuals that are assigned long-term care, so we can provide better services. In the meantime we

are doing many things in acute care to try to accommodate people while they're waiting.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, minister.

You know the Tignish seniors' co-op, I'm sure you are familiar with it. It is the Cadillac of community care facilities on PEI. They asked me if you would be willing to sit down with them and discuss the possibility of, perhaps, an expansion onto the facility that they have to include long-term care beds. Perhaps part of your review that designated beds may come to the Tignish centre.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can inform the House that I've had the opportunity since becoming minister to have numerous meetings with organizations, businesses. I know the Member from Belfast-Murray River invited me down to her community care facility in her district. We've had a number of organizations that have inquired about the issue of long-term care and being assigned to community care facilities.

I would say that the Tignish co-op community care facility is the Cadillac version. It's a beautiful facility and the staff is very dedicated to provide really good patient care.

At the commencement of our review within long-term care we will certainly be making the decision whether there should be more beds assigned to that particular area or not in future, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Holland College Alberton designated funding

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question's for the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning. It was a proud day for me when the Alberton Holland College campus first opened. At that time it was provided with designated funding to ensure its long-term viability and it was given a chance to establish in the region.

That period has since expired, but the need for designated funding is still there in order to plan proper programs that will ensure this rural college is there to provide a post-secondary education to students in our area of the province that might not have that opportunity if it wasn't there.

Can the minister assure me that the designated funding will continue for Alberton Holland College campus?

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

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

That's a great question. I firmly believe if the member wasn't there to stand up for his community the facility would not have been put there. He's done an excellent job in making sure that Holland College's presence is in Prince County.

Since the facility has been built we have contributed over \$5.5 million to the facility, both from capital and operational funding. We will continue to support the Holland College up there because we believe they're doing a great job.

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

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The original designated funding was for a period of five years at a set amount of support.

Can the minister assure us up in West Prince that that will be the case again?

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

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

As you know, it has been in the throne speech that we are working with our two

post-secondary institutions for a long-term funding formula in order to help those facilities become even greater. We are working with Holland College and UPEI in that order to get a long-term funding formula.

I can guarantee you the number one thing, the facility in Alberton will not be closing. It is a great facility. It provides great educational opportunities for a lot of people. With that member in that seat, Mr. Speaker, I can assure the residents in that area it'll not be closing.

Thank you.

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

Deleted government email accounts (further)

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week the Premier seemed to suggest that he didn't know the names of the two senior bureaucrats whose emails were deleted, as identified in the Auditor General's report.

Question to the Premier: Can you confirm today what you told us last week, that you don't, in fact, know the individuals' names that were involved?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We can go back to when this government was first elected. One of the very first things that took place was this government asked the Auditor General to go out and look into a particular matter.

The Auditor General has completed her work and she's brought her report back. That report was to be brought back to the Public Accounts. I respect very much the Public Accounts process and I respect very much the work that the Auditor General has done.

All of those details are certainly ones that the Auditor General will have and will report to the Public Accounts Committee.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That wasn't even an answer at all, it was 40 seconds of just air, filling time. This isn't the wharf in Souris where you're dragging Alan Campbell off to jail, this is serious, this is Question Period. I asked the Premier if he will confirm that what he told us last week was true.

Is it true, Premier, that you don't know whose emails were deleted?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

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

One of the things I'd like to point out is that when the Auditor General and her staff did their work they took approximately – they went through over 10,000 documents. The Auditor General herself interviewed all the principals that were involved in this file. The Auditor General has a tremendous amount of information that, individually, we don't have that ourselves. The Auditor General was to bring that information back to the Public Accounts. Again, we respect that process very much.

I know that the opposition have had the opportunity at Public Accounts, and I'm sure they'll take that opportunity to pose those questions to the Auditor General.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was the Auditor General who said the fact that the emails were deleted limited her scope. You should read the report.

Question to the Premier again. I feel like this Premier has a duty to end this obstruction, the obstruction in this House that he has put on this whole session, and the obstruction in Public Accounts. It's time to level with Islanders. Islanders are his employers. We

found out yesterday that 18% of them have already left you.

Question to the Premier: Why do you feel justified skirting your duty to Islanders with your obstruction and your evasions?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Auditor General's report has come out. We've said all along since the outset that we were looking forward to that report. We said we were very confident in the way that the Auditor General would carry out that audit and the Auditor General has done that.

The Auditor General has made 15 recommendations in her report. Government has taken those very seriously. We've acted on all of those 15 recommendations already. The majority of them have already been completed. I think that we've shown that government has taken this extremely seriously, otherwise we could drag this on for a long time. But that has been acted upon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Either the Premier is petrified to answer these questions so Islanders know the truth or he's scared to death of me, and it's probably both.

The very fact is that this Premier knew egaming was the single biggest thing – when he stepped forward, when he put his name forward, this was already one of the biggest issues on Islanders minds. It was him who reluctantly sent this to the Auditor General. It was him who said: No, I'm going to deal with this right away before the election. It was him that said: There'd be no obstruction and no one will stand in your way.

Question to the Premier: What changed between then and now to cause you to clam up?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the Auditor General has gone out, she's gone through the various departments that were involved. She's interviewed each and every one of the principals that were involved. There were no obstructions. She got total work, she was able to work well with everyone that was there, and everything that she asked for she got.

The process was to bring that back to Public Accounts and the Auditor General has. I'm sure the Auditor General would be more than willing to respond to any in-depth questions because there's nobody who knows more about this, Mr. Speaker, than the Auditor General.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I worked in IT since 1998 and there's a lot of things that don't pass the smell test here for me. Only a handful of people in all of government would have the ability to actually delete an email, and not one of them – not one of them – would do it unless they were instructed to do it by someone. Perhaps even sent an email telling them to do it.

Question to the Premier: Do those written instructions exist somewhere on paper or electronically? If so, will you table it?

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

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

Continuing on with the line of questions, my colleague the Minister of Finance has clearly indicated that as ministers of specific departments responsible we take the work of the Auditor General very seriously. One of the recommendations was to address record information management. We're currently evaluating and assessing all government departments in respect to how records are kept and managed. We're also sending a clear message to departments and senior officials that we're committed to supporting new policies and new procedures by hiring new staff, Mr. Speaker, to do the work.

Thank you.

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

Hacking of government servers

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Simply put, emails don't exist, they remain on a server. There are two possible outcomes here. Somebody instructed someone to delete the account off the computer, off a government server, which is a serious violation of the Criminal Code of Canada and a breach of security at the highest level or, two, the system was hacked, which is a serious problem that should be investigated immediately to make sure that the records of the public are safe.

Question to the Premier: Have the email servers of government been hacked in the past 10 years?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to point to the specifics that were said by the hon. member. I think if there was any criminal matters that have taken place, if there were any laws that had been broken, I feel 100% confidence that the Auditor General would have drawn particular attention to that in her report and she would have made recommendations to any local authority.

The Auditor General did not do that and there were no recommendations or there were no observations on her part of any criminality that took place. I'd like to make that very clear to the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier doesn't get up to answer of my questions here today. Long gone are the days of Robert Ghiz where he actually wanted to discuss the issues of the day. This Premier is well too scared even though he's

sticking up for Robert Ghiz. Funny how it goes, eh?

If this Premier doesn't have the decency to answer questions in this House, this Premier doesn't have the decency to allow Islanders to find out happened, then history will judge this Premier as guilty as those who have committed the sin.

Deleted government email accounts (further)

Question to the Premier: Whose emails were deleted?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said earlier, the Auditor General is the person who conducted this audit.

Mr. Trivers: Cover up.

Mr. Roach: The Auditor General had the opportunity to review tens of thousands of documents. The Auditor General interviewed all of the principals. She personally interviewed all of the principals that were involved in this and the Auditor General has all that information.

We respect the fact that the Auditor General has brought that document back to Public Accounts and we respect the role that Public Accounts has. Clearly, the opportunity is at Public Accounts where those questions should be asked of the Auditor General.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[End of Question Period]