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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

THURSDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2016



Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

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

**FOIPP and Internet contract legal opinion (further)**

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

The following are responses to questions from the Member from Kensington-Malpeque regarding legal advice on the Bell Aliant contract and retroactive loan disclosure.

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

**Home reno program spending (further)**

**Ms. Mundy:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Member from Belfast-Murray River asked me about the budget for home renovation programs.

In last year's budget the department did not under spend for the renovation program. The budgeted amount for 2015-2016 was \$1,111,500. The actual spending was slightly more at \$1,260,054.

The department will spend the allocated budget for the program this year as well. According to the year to date actual and budget forecast we have budgeted \$1,361,500. To date we have spent one million three hundred and one dollars – sorry, one million, three hundred thousand, one hundred – or \$1,301,372. Oh my gosh, there are too many threes there.

Our government met the platform commitment to increase funding to the home repair and renovation programs by \$400,000. This is providing additional help to Islanders across our province, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Questions by Members

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

**Climate change plan**

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

Climate change is on the minds of many Canadians as the Canadian premiers meet with the prime minister tomorrow. Here on Prince Edward Island we're vulnerable to rising sea levels and extreme weather from climate change. Our greenhouse emissions per person are 12 tons a year, second-lowest in Canada.

Question to the minister of environment: What extra sacrifices will Islanders be asked to make as part of your government's climate change plan?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

As alluded to by the Leader of the Opposition, this climate change file is a file that has received a significant amount of attention over the last 12 or 13 months.

Currently, as we speak, leaders from all 13 jurisdictions from across Canada are meeting at a table with our prime minister to determine what a pan-Canadian framework regarding this climate change issue should look like. There will be a lot of discussion held today in Ottawa on that particular purpose.

As the Province of Prince Edward Island, we're looking to contribute in a very big way at that table today, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**Carbon tax pay date**

**Leader of the Opposition:** Mr. Speaker, a key part of the federal government's plan is a new carbon tax.

Suggest (Indistinct) start at \$10 per ton of emissions rising and as much as \$50 per ton after five years. Prince Edward Island's current emissions are roughly 12 tons per person a year, and we'd be looking at taking \$18 million in one year from consumers,

fishers, farmers, and other businesses. By the end of five years that number would rise to \$90 million, or \$620 per resident of PEI.

Question to the environment minister: When would be the earliest that Islanders could expect to start paying a carbon tax?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

Several months ago the federal government did indicate that they would be looking at imposing some method of carbon pricing all across Canada. That's the purpose of establishing this pan-Canada framework. It's the reason why these individuals are in Ottawa today.

Prince Edward Island does have a part to play in climate change. As has been mentioned, we have some issues with eroding shorelines, with rising sea levels.

What we are looking for for Prince Edward Island is a made-in-Prince Edward Island approach that works for Islanders, is effective to the needs to mitigate, to be prepared for adaption, and continue to work on that progress.

There's a lot of work being done, and a lot of work will continue to be done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** So we don't know when. Mr. Speaker, a carbon tax will increase the tax of cost of everyday household items.

Studies suggest that electricity will go up (Indistinct) five cents a kilowatt. Gas and oil will go up an extra 15 cents a litre.

Question to the environment minister. This government is taxing Islanders to death now. How do you expect Islanders, minister, to shoulder these extra costs?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

It is our goal to continue to work on adaptation, mitigation of climate change, as it relates to Prince Edward Island. We want to have a made-in-PEI solution, but that doesn't mean that you don't talk to your neighbours regionally. We'll continue to do that and we'll develop a plan that works in all provinces of our region, and do it in a collective, collaborative manner, keeping in mind those that need other assistance.

There are several ways to work at this and we're going to work together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

We don't know how much Islanders are going to have to actually pay.

Here on the Island, our biggest sources of emissions are from transportation and agriculture. When the Premier came back from Paris he said that Islanders will have to make some changes. He said: We'll be doing a lot more walking and make fewer trips to the grocery store.

Question to the environment minister: Did the Premier mean that Islanders will be doing a lot more walking because they can't afford to run an automobile, or did the Premier mean that Islanders would have to make fewer trips to the grocery store because they won't be able to afford to buy anything?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

I think it's important to note the amount of work that has gone into this, but we're looking at a made-in-PEI solution.

We know that there are opportunities where we can reduce our carbon footprint in a very effective way and at the same time work with our economy on PEI to build that, develop methods of reducing our carbon

footprint, and allowing Islanders to use programs that will reduce their oil usage, will reduce their heating costs in their homes, and allow them to leave some money in their pockets. But at the same time work towards mitigation, and that's the goal of our climate change issues.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

### Federal carbon pricing talks

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

Islanders are doing more than their fair share in reducing carbon emissions. Almost 30% of our energy comes from wind turbines and we have very little heavy industry. PEI produces only about half the amount of carbon emissions expected. That's right, we're already better than – 50% better than the rest of Canada when it comes to per capita carbon emissions. Yet we still have the same carbon emission reduction targets.

Question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Minister, why didn't you stand up for PEI during federal carbon pricing talks like environment ministers from other provinces did?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

Currently, there's a lot of discussion going on with our Atlantic counterparts. As referenced recently, in the last couple of weeks, Nova Scotia has indicated how they will move forward, or they're looking at discussions with the federal government. New Brunswick laid out some plans (Indistinct) there yesterday.

We're getting ready to look at all those options, work with our regions collectively, but we want to look at a made-in-PEI solution that is effective and efficient. We are leaders now in areas of wind energy. We want to improve on those. We want to make it better for Islanders. But at the same time, we want it to be leading to mitigation and we'll continue to work on that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

### Carbon emission credit

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

It's funny that the minister mentions a made-in-PEI perspective because during the climate change strategy consultations here on the Island, Islanders found out that strategies to reduce electricity usage were off the table because New Brunswick gets the credit for reduced carbon emissions if we lower our usage. If Islanders produce more local, renewable energy, we don't get credit for the associated reduction in carbon emissions.

A question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Minister, why aren't you showing leadership and fighting to get carbon emission credit for locally produced renewable Island energy?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

I'm glad that the hon. member referenced the consultation process as we were working toward our mitigation strategy. I was so impressed by the Islanders that showed up at those events all across PEI and brought some really great ideas out for our consultants to review. They're in that process right now. They'll be bringing back recommendations very soon.

Some of the issues that we were dealing with there were brought forward off the floor in a very effective manner. Currently, we have the two strategies underway. The energy strategy's ready to come out, and some of those crossovers will be dealt with in that strategy as well.

We're looking forward to coming out with some really positive solutions for Prince Edward Island and I hope the hon. member will be pleased with those.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

### HST and carbon emissions

**Mr. Trivers:** Mr. Speaker, we are still waiting for the final PEI energy strategy and implementation plan that was promised for this fall.

In the draft of that energy strategy it says that HST will be added to home heating oil instead of being removed from all heating sources as recommended by this Legislature's standing committee. Now, this would likely generate over \$10 million in additional tax revenue for the province.

Question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Minister, do you plan to use this additional \$10 million tax grab to offer much-needed incentives to reduce carbon emissions or just put in general revenue?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

As with any consultation that's done or when they're performed, there are recommendations that come out of those. Those are recommendations only. As I have mentioned already a couple of times on the floor today, we are looking at a PEI solution. Everything is on the table.

There was no defined methods that we're working towards, but we are going to do our very best to allow some mitigation purposes, be protective of those that are low-income and vulnerable, but at the same time make a very effective process for PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

### **Seedling cost to watershed groups**

**Mr. Trivers:** Mr. Speaker, trees harvest solar energy to provide heat, capture and store carbon in the ground, have a built-in air conditioner, remove toxins from the environment, slow global warming, and build themselves without needing a factory.

Planting more trees on PEI is one of the most cost-effective and best ways to lower carbon emissions without putting in a carbon tax. However, this minister has actually

started charging watershed groups for seedlings instead, charging them to reforest this Island.

A question for the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Minister, will you commit today to stop charging watershed groups for trees that they plant to reforest this Island and reduce carbon emissions?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

The watershed groups that do significant work across Prince Edward Island are very in tune with what has to go on in their areas.

In order to get some data on that they were charged an extremely nominal fee, just a few pennies towards the actual fee of the tree, and they appreciate that, and they do agree that –

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct). Stop charging for trees.

**Speaker:** Hon. member, let the minister answer the question.

**Mr. Mitchell:** They do agree that as we are at this time of battling climate change, these trees are an effective method to do that, and we will encourage more of that as we move forward, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

### **Incentives re: transportation-related carbon emissions**

**Mr. Trivers:** Mr. Speaker, transportation-related carbon emissions contribute, by far, the most to PEI's output.

There used to be a hybrid car tax rebate, but in typical short-sighted fashion that was cancelled by this government in 2013. This is the low-hanging fruit of carbon emission reduction that should be harvested immediately. For example, incentives for hybrid and electric cars.

A question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Minister, will you commit here today to offer incentives as

soon as possible to reduce transportation-related carbon emission, please?

**Speaker:** The hon. minister –

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

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

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

When we went out and did the energy strategy consultations that –

**Mr. Trivers:** Which we haven't seen the report of yet. Release the report. Keep your promise.

**Ms. Biggar:** – Dunsky put together, over 70 recommendations, we are putting together –

**Mr. Trivers:** Follow the rules.

**Ms. Biggar:** We are putting together those recommendations in a fashion that will benefit Islanders and help them reduce their emission use as well, and when the strategy is complete –

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct) show us the incentives, show us the (Indistinct).

**Ms. Biggar:** – in consultation with the climate change strategy, that will be released.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

### **Carbon tax and fuel prices**

**Mr. Trivers:** Mr. Speaker, as far as I can tell this proposed carbon tax is really appearing to follow the European model, and on average, European gas prices are about three dollars a litre. That's almost double that on the Island.

A question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Minister, will fuel prices double here as a result of a carbon tax, or do you even know how much they will increase?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

The hon. member is doing a tremendous job of fear-mongering out of his chair today.

These targets that are being presented by the federal government, and they are being implemented by the federal government at \$10 per ton, is a fairly low amount, in the range of two cents per litre, as was mentioned at the strategy discussions.

We're working towards all options that are being presented. The fact of what was presented at those consultation processes will be looked at very favourably. Electric vehicles, I'm sure we'll see that as a recommendation we'll be looking at. Much more tree planting on Prince Edward Island is a significant way of continuing on, and we'll look at all those, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **Carbon pricing at source of production**

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

Many options are debated about the best way to implement a price on carbon that's fair to the consumer. One suggestion is that the price on carbon should be charged at the source of production rather than the end user.

Minister, do you support this method of carbon pricing?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

As I said, currently there are 13 leaders from all across Canada that are sitting at a table to discuss what this pan-Canadian framework should be, should look like. Much work has gone into that, developing that. Four committees were struck regarding things such as mitigation, adaption.

Prince Edward Island chaired one of those working groups and working committees, and, of course, on Prince Edward Island we've established a new climate change

secretariat who's putting in endless hours of work on this.

All those things will be talked about in Ottawa will be how we move forward, Mr. Speaker, all across Canada, and we will look at all of them.

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

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

Minister, when you were at your national meetings did you suggest this kind of method of carbon pricing to try and protect Islanders from absorbing the heavy cost at purchase?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

All ministers of environment have met several times now with the federal minister of environment regarding climate change. The discussions have been very collaborative. Everybody wants the outcome to be effective, but at the same time work for the provinces they represent.

That work has gone on over the past 13 months, will continue over the next year. Two thousand and eighteen has been an established target for the federal government, and collectively we're all working on that path.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **Carbon tax revenue neutral**

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

Minister, will this new carbon tax be revenue neutral? By that I mean, will this new tax revenue be offset by matching tax cuts elsewhere for Island taxpayers, farms, and businesses?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

I believe any revenue of whatever type of method we use on battling climate change has to be used at mitigation factors, it has to be used at reducing our carbon footprint, and we'll be working on those methods, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Minister, the non-answer is worrying us. It's worrying Islanders, especially when we ask if it's going to be revenue neutral. When your government brought in HST you did anything but make it revenue neutral. HST was supposed to be beneficial for businesses and the economy, but what you did was raise it so high that now we take in an extra \$22 million in taxes from Islanders.

You wouldn't make HST revenue neutral. Can we trust your government to make the carbon tax revenue neutral rather than just another tax?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

We've been working with all provinces in regards to climate change, but we as a province will ensure that whatever carbon pricing mechanism does not disadvantage PEI and that it works effectively well with our neighbouring provinces, and we will continue to work on them with them on that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

It's concerning. I know we're still in the negotiation stage, but why can't the minister come out and say it's going to be revenue neutral? That is an easy concept to tell Islanders. Will you please commit today to making the carbon tax revenue neutral?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

As I said, I think it's important that whatever dollars get raised from battling climate change goes right back into mitigation, some adaptation purposes. Those are significant to Prince Edward Island. We do have to work with our vulnerable and low-income people to support their needs too, but fiscally neutral – as long as the dollars are being put back into the programs that will aid and help Islanders to reduce their carbon footprint, that's the goal, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **Carbon tax questions and answers**

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

Minister, we have Islanders who are really worried. They are asking legitimate questions like: Who will get taxed, what will get taxed, how often will the tax be adjusted, will the tax ever go back down?

Minister, when can Islanders expect to get answers to these questions?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

The Islanders that I've been talking to over the last several months are appreciative of the fact that we're looking for that made-in-PEI solution, the one that makes sense for all Islanders here.

They realize that there are climate change situations. It's easy to tell with the change in our weather patterns, the rise of our sea levels. They feel it's important that we do what's right for Islanders. They're very appreciative of the fact that we're taking our time. We have time, everything is on the table, and we're going to work in a very positive way that makes it very effective for Islanders when we're battling this very important issue, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **Rural broadband and high-speed Internet**

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

The Minister of Economic Development and Tourism has told this House that government is talking to private Internet service providers as well as community groups to get better Internet access on rural Prince Edward Island. There could be many advantages to using community municipal cooperative models for rural Internet: a greater incentive to maintain services in the community, increased flexibility, more responsive service, and the profits stay locally.

Question to the minister: How has government explored the possibility of using community municipal or cooperative models to improve rural broadband?

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

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

As I've said several times in this House, how important ensuring that Islanders and businesses alike from one end of the Island to the other have good high-speed Internet connections. What we've done is we've – and the most recent and a good example is Maximeville, that we sent out an RFP to the suppliers that could come in there, the ISP suppliers that could come in there, and set up broadband services to that community that seems to be a grey area on PEI. We've done that.

But further to that, driving competition in regards to these companies, we've just heard yesterday that one of the suppliers has already offered up to do it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Most of the discussion about rural broadband has centered on economic development, but many other opportunities become available once we have good, true high-speed in all of our communities: distance learning, telemedicine, smart

electric grids, and civic engagement, to name just a few.

A question to the minister: How has government considered these non-economic opportunities, in particular, during its discussions with ISPs?

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

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

I've stated several times in the House that it's not only businesses but students that are learning from whether it's abroad or within Canada from universities. It's extremely important to us and we're taking all facets. That's why we're putting this on the front burner. That's why I've been talking about it in the media. That's why we've been accessing any possible options for communities to come forward. If there are issues out there we want to know about them. We want to understand them. We want to make available any infrastructures in our government, whether it be land or buildings that these towers could be placed on. We'll work with service providers. We want to resolve this issue as soon as possible.

Thank you.

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

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

In order for us to take advantage of all these opportunities multiple departments will need to collaborate, and we know this government's approach to rural development is that all departments have to work together on it.

A question to the minister: How many discussions have you or your staff had with other government departments specifically about how to take advantage of the opportunities that will become available by having true high-speed Internet across Prince Edward Island?

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

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

My department alone covers bioscience, marine tech, aerospace, farming, fishing, and our lending portfolio through FPEI and IID. I'm involved in every one of these industries and sectors. We continue to – we – as my mandate is to drive the economy of PEI. I have to look at all these different sectors to ensure that they're reaching capacity, and that's why we've led the country in exports over the past two years. That's why, Mr. Speaker, over 60% of my loan portfolio is in rural PEI.

Thank you.

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

### Open data and new government website

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, with the introduction of a new government website earlier this year, it's my understanding that there's going to be some initiatives taken in relation to open data. Minister, what steps is your department taking to expand the number of open data offerings since the introduction of the new website?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I know that the Member from Rustico-Emerald will be listening intently.

Back in June this year my department launched the open data website. I'm very pleased to say that the site has been accessed – there have been hundreds and hundreds of people that have been interested, and in particular the open data community has been very active.

So far, like I said, there's been hundreds of downloads, everything from school enrollment to vehicle licensing and maps and different types of registrations, so it's been very well received in the public, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, your first supplementary.

### Open data policy

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, a number of provinces have a policy which outlines how open data is governed and how data sets become available. Could you indicate whether such a policy will be developed and made publicly available?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

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

There's been a lot of uptake on this particular launch of this particular product. We also released in there the open government practices that we'll be following.

When we started developing the practices, the licenses, the open data standards, we looked to the federal government because the federal government has done the same type of open data system that we are now – and we're following those rules just so that we can be consistent with the other provinces and the federal government across the country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

### **PISA participation rates**

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

My question today is for the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture. Mr. Minister, Islanders are proud of our students' performance in the PISA, but there are questions about the PEI sample and participation rates.

Could the minister please advise this House on what participation rates are required for PISA?

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

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

PISA is a very rigorous assessment, a global assessment, that over 500,000 15-year-olds in 72 countries participated in.

In the process, all eligible 15-year-olds' names are referred to Stats Canada. Stats Canada identifies the sample. The sample is then returned back to school principals. At that time they have the responsibility to look at individual's who may have a functional disability, an intellectual disability or limited language experience.

The 2015 PISA sample is statistically equivalent to previous census samples, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche, first supplementary.

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

My supplementary question is to the same minister.

Mr. Minister, can you assure Islanders that the PEI student exclusion rate did not affect our results?

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

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

PISA uses two participation rates, both student and school. I do want to add that our exclusion rates were high, but that's a reflection of the rich and inclusive approach that we take to all children in our public school system. As the minister, we're extremely proud of that.

But we had the highest school participation rate in the country at 99.3. Other provinces had many schools who opted out of PISA, for example, Quebec, whose participation rate was 51%, or they had special needs classes or schools that were completely eliminated. This was not the case in Prince Edward Island, and every single one of our schools participated in PISA.

Thank you.

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

**Speaker:** Order, please!

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

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

There's an awful lot of spin going on over there today and I'm sure I'm going to get some spin back here again.

We've seen throughout the revelations around the egaming scandal that a lot of time and money was spent on wining and dining. We know the former finance minister had traveled to London, England, we know that government staff had traveled to London, England to meet with Simplex about one of the components. But perhaps not everyone knows that some of that wining and dining happened right here on Prince Edward Island.

### **Crowbush egaming social**

Question to the Minister of Finance: Can you confirm that Crowbush golf course was closed to the public for a private social involving the various players of the egaming scandal?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

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

As I've stated a number of times in the House, I rely quite a bit on the Auditor General, as I'd stated many times in the House over the last number of months. The Auditor General has spent, her and her staff, roughly 5,000 hours looking into this file and they've brought that back to the Public Accounts. As I understand, the Auditor General has been twice at Public Accounts prepared to answer the in-depth questions.

But, Mr. Speaker, directly to the question that the member has asked, the answer is no.

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

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

The finance minister may in fact be playing with words on this one because they opened it a day early. They opened it a day early in 2011 and had this private egaming event. So, yeah, they didn't close it a day, but they opened it a day early and it was a day's sales lost for the provincial government, and the golf course made a tidy sum on that day had it been opened.

Question to the finance minister: How much did the government pay for this secret egaming event at Crowbush?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

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

As we've said many times here in the House, the Auditor General has spent – her and her staff – over 5,000 hours digging into this file, they've looked at over tens of thousands of documents, and the Auditor General has interviewed all the principals involved in this.

The Auditor General was twice before the Public Accounts Committee. The Auditor General has the answer to the specifics in this. I've had, as many others have had, the opportunity to read the Auditor General's reports. The specifics are with the Auditor General.

Mr. Speaker, I have no knowledge of any kind of a – as the member says – any kind of a secret deal or something that happened at a golf course.

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

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

I and the members over on this side have spent countless hours, too, digging into this file and that's why we ask questions on it. You can hide behind the Auditor General if you wish, but I'll hide behind no one, and I'll stand here and represent Prince Edward Island and ask questions.

Question to the tourism minister: Did the province receive any revenue from this secret egaming junket at Crowbush, or did the taxpayers comp the whole thing like we did the egaming loan?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

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

Just I'll preface that answer by saying, not only does the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters have the honour of representing Islanders, but the other 26 of us here in this House also have that honour.

Let me make it clear. When the Premier came on board with this government one of the very first things he did was he asked the Auditor General to look into this egaming file. The Auditor General really had carte blanche to go out and use her staff and dig into things. The Auditor General is the one that has all the in-depth information on this after 5,000 hours.

I would suggest that the next time the Auditor General's at the standing committee that might be a great opportunity for them to continue with those types of questions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Your Liberal backbenchers were pretty near crying here the other day because I was asking questions and taking up their time.

The minister can't answer whether or not the taxpayers were on the hook for comping the secret egaming golf tournament in Crowbush, which means that they likely were comped. According to emails we've seen the attendees that day at Crowbush were to include a number of government and private sector people involved in the egaming play, including the chief of staff of the former premier Robert Ghiz and his inner circle.

Question to the Minister of Finance: How is it that you were so unaware that this was happening right under your nose in your own department?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

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

I will remind the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters that I was elected at the same time that he was, in October of 2011, and I believe that what started to take place, according to the Auditor General's report, commenced in 2008 or 2009.

The reason why the Premier asked the Auditor General to look into that was he wanted to have one person in there that we have all the confidence in the world in, that

Islanders have the confidence in. I'm kind of dismayed to hear that member today state that perhaps they don't have the same confidence in the Auditor General because they're now out doing their own investigation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. LaVie:** Take your cop hat off. You're not a cop anymore! Take it off.

**Mr. Myers:** You're a joke, officially a joke.

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

**Mr. LaVie:** You're retired.

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

That is a complete joke. Never once did we say that. That's a joke. That's a joke of a way to treat a question in this – that's a joke of a way to treat Islanders who want answers in this. There are people who want answers in your district too. There are people who want answers right across Prince Edward Island. That is a joke. I didn't say anything about the Auditor General. Not only am I going to ask him to retract that after Question Period, I expect an apology too.

### **Egaming social meal**

After a long day of golfing, this group of people were quite hungry, and they went to a secret egaming luncheon in Charlottetown at a fancy restaurant.

Question to the finance minister: Did taxpayers pick up the bill for this surf-and-turf at a fancy Charlottetown restaurant?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

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

Not sure, there's a bit of a question there, but there was an awful lot of preamble before that question. I look forward to reading the Hansard that the member was referring to later.

The Auditor General has done an incredible job of investigating this. Her and her staff have spent a lot of time – and the Auditor General does have all the intricacies and the

answers to that. The Auditor General's report that I refer to, that I see, is the same one that is a public document.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Myers:** So, another non-answer. Another non-answer by this government.

A bunch of people took themselves out to eat at a fancy restaurant. The bill was \$8,143 that night. I hope for the minister's sake and I hope for taxpayers' sakes that we didn't pick up that tab that night.

Question to the Minister of Finance: If taxpayers spent \$8,143 and change on surf-and-turf for the players involved in this egaming scandal, would you consider that to be appropriate?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

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

The member asked the question. I'm not aware of any dinners. I never saw anything like that in the Auditor General's report. I know that there were other avenues that were being looked at with respect to loyalty cards and those sorts of things.

But my understanding is that that particular file was long closed before the middle of 2011.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I have the receipt, the \$8,000 meal, I have the email that set it all up, and I'll be giving it to the media after Question Period.

As I mentioned before there were folks from Simplex and CMT at this all-day soirée, and there were also staff from your old department. Folks from the Premier's Office, the liquor commission were there. Even your former department's external legal staff, Billy Dow, was there, or supposedly there. Interestingly, though,

there was no one from the Mi'Kmaq Confederacy there.

Interesting that because for months your government's egaming spin was that the Confederacy were the ones driving the bus on the egaming file.

### **Egaming social and Mi'Kmaq Confederacy**

Question to the Minister of Finance: Doesn't it seem strange that Island taxpayers would host a private egaming golf junket, a surf-and-turf gala afterwards, and not include the people who your government supposedly said were driving the bus for this whole file?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

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

I noticed that the member does kind of start his question off with automatically it's egaming, automatically it's secret, automatically it's all these other things. That's just his words.

The fact is that there was a loyalty card program that was being looked at, and there were a number of people that were involved in a loyalty program.

That had nothing to do with the egaming file.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I'm not sure if the Minister of Finance now is saying the people who did the loyalty card program took themselves golfing free on a government golf course for a whole day and spent \$8,000 eating at Sims steakhouse afterwards. I'm not sure if that's what he's saying, or if it's the egaming people, but suddenly he admits that it happened, which is a lot further ahead than we were for the previous six questions.

Now he knows it happened, and as a matter of fact, he knows who's there.

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

Question to the minister of education: Could you tell the House today whose emails were deleted?

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

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

As the minister responsible for records information management, we have been given clear direction from the Auditor General in respect to the recommendations to respond to her report. As the minister responsible for records information management, as I said, time after time, I take that responsibility very seriously.

Not only are we taking it seriously, we're putting the recommendations into action. Currently, as we're speaking, there are assessments going on and training with all government staff to look at consistencies and procedures. We're also looking at bringing in legislation to tighten up compliance to make sure there's a higher level of accountability and consistency with how we store and record record information, Mr. Speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** Follow the rules.

**Mr. Currie:** We are going to continue. I respect the office of the Auditor General and I take that responsibility very seriously, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

[End of Question Period]