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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

FRIDAY, 9 DECEMBER 2016

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Educational assessment wait time

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

PEI physician vacancies is not the only area of government that the MacLauchlan government has dropped the ball on. Current wait time for educational assessments by the Public Schools Branch psychologists in some areas of the province is three years.

Question to the education minister: Why are you failing the children of Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: Hon. minister, before you answer that – hon. leader, you mentioned the Premier's name. You say hon. Premier.

Leader of the Opposition: I don't recall that. Thank you.

Speaker: It's okay.

Mr. Myers: You did it yesterday. You said Mundy. You said Minister Mundy in your statement.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Oh, okay, the hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition. We've had lots of discussions this week, both internally and publicly, about our commitment to children with unique needs in the public school system. As a former educator who spent 20 years working with families and children with unique needs, I'm very passionate, I'm very committed, and I'm very focused on continuing to improve markers to continue to support children with special needs in all our classrooms across Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

There's a three-month waiting list for some students who need to have a consultation with the community mental health, and that's disgraceful.

Question the minister of education: Will you explain to the House in 40 seconds or less why any student suffering with a potential mental health issue would have to wait three months?

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

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

As I alluded to, government's commitment to continue to grow supports for children with unique needs, but not only unique needs. But the question from the Leader of the Opposition is very focused on children that are experiencing higher levels of anxiety and dealing with mental health.

It's a theme that's coming from the learning partners council, the Principals Council, and the district advisory council. We're taking those conversations very seriously, and we're working very hard with the Public Schools Branch and the system, and in collaboration with the ministry of health, to make sure that we're using all our resources as effectively to reach every child that we can, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

West Prince youth addictions counsellor

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

It's a theme. I'm glad you recognized that, because it's a theme you're failing to deal with.

Minister, you represent a fair piece of West Prince, yet youth and families in that area are being treated as second-class citizens and are struggling to deal with some serious

youth addiction issues on their own. They're not getting the help they need.

Question to the minister: Why have you not filled the youth addictions counsellor position for West Prince, or do you plan to?

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

Mr. LaVie: No plan.

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

I'll have to bring that specific question back. I don't know if that's a position that's under my responsibility to the Public Schools Branch. It could be under another department, but we'll follow up.

I recognize the needs. We did meet with a group of principals from West Prince and we have heard from the public meetings. We have listened to the small group meetings, and we have read their written submissions in respect to the issues that are coming forward, and recognize that government needs to continue to evolve and respond to how we provide services.

We'll continue to work hard. I have some productive discussions going on right now with current budget and looking at ways that we can provide more services and reach more children, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Autism students number

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

For some time now we've been talking about the challenges families are experiencing, as well as our schools and communities, through children with autism. This spring the minister of education told this House that there were 346 students with autism in Island schools.

Question to this minister of education: Minister, how many students with autism are in our schools this calendar year?

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

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

Government recognizes that the incidence of autism in the early years is on the rise. We have more children entering the public school system experiencing a range of issues on the autism spectrum, and we've very pleased that we continue to grow and expand the supports for children with autism.

Today we've got 360 EAs. We've got eight autism staff that are designated inside the department to look at the zero to four early years window. We also have eight staff working very closely with schools in a consultation process with educators in Island schools all across Prince Edward Island.

We've got 10 speech-language pathologists, and we've got 140 resource teachers. We've got 9.5 psychologists –

Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Currie: – and 50 school counsellors, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Autism assessment and diagnosis student numbers

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

I'd like to thank the minister for not answering the question, as usual.

My next question, again to the minister of education: How many students in our school system are currently waiting for assessment and potential diagnosis of autism?

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

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

I recognize that – and I’ve said this – that my commitment in continuing to support families and continuing to work with the system.

We have approximately a budget of over \$40 million responding to the needs of children with unique needs, and very proud of the inclusion practices we have in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Right now we’re very committed. Right now we do a number of initiatives. In the early years we provide over \$700,000 for one-on-one care for 10-25 hours a week, as well as after-school tutoring grants, and currently, in the early years, we have 40 children that are on the waitlist with IBI and we’re currently evaluation our caseloads.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

Once again, I’d like to thank the hon. minister for, again, not answering one of my questions.

Autism assessment and diagnosis wait time

Another question to the minister of education: Minister, on average how long are these students waiting to be assessed and diagnosed?

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

Mr. Currie: Mr. Speaker, there’s the assessments that are conducted in the department of health.

I know that we’ve made significant inroads with investments in physical medicine over the years, but also recognize, with the improved assessments, obviously that has increased. I believe we’ve got 40 students right now that are waiting for IBI intervention between our zero to four-year-olds, and I recognize that’s too long.

I will bring back the exact number of students that are waiting for assessment inside the Public Schools Branch.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Shortage of psychologists

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

The minister just somewhat answered my question, my second-last question, and, again, he failed to answer the question I just asked, but I will go on.

Again, to the minister, these students would usually have these diagnostic assessments done by school psychologists.

Again, question to the minister: You talked about how many psychologists are currently in the system, but how many psychologists are we currently short in the system that are still trying to be hired?

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

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

I believe we have 9.5 psychologists that are hired. We are currently looking to hire. We have a wait time that’s completely unacceptable, as the minister, but there are a number of factors, one, identifying individuals to fill those positions.

I’m looking at ways that we can address that formal assessment by looking at privatizing and moving towards psychologists that can provide those supports.

But I must add, while children are on the wait list there are interventions. I talked about the level of supports, whether it be through EAs, through resource teachers. Students are being supported that are still waiting for the formal assessments.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Autism and pressure point in schools

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

Again, to the minister of education, this spring the education minister set an

unprecedented increase in students with autism spectrum disorder has become a point of pressure in the school system.

Question to the minister of education:
Minister, can you clarify what you mean by saying students with autism are a pressure point in our schools?

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

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

As I indicated in earlier lines of question, I recognize as minister, with my ongoing meetings with the division of student services, which provides supports for children with special needs across the Province of Prince Edward Island, we're seeing an increase. There are more children coming into the system with autism needs. I can't give you a formal diagnosis because there's range on the autism spectrum, but I can bring a breakdown back.

I feel that we are making inroads, but, Mr. Speaker, we've got more work to do, no question.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

The minister goes on to say that, yes, the long waitlist, or time, for these children to see a psychologist for a potential diagnosis with autism spectrum disorder is unacceptable and far too long. But the minister goes on to say, that while that is unacceptable there are supports in place. I question, though, how you can have supports in place when you don't even have a diagnosis.

Autism action

Another question to the minister of education. The minister further said that addressing the issue would be a top priority once the *Education Act* was passed. The *Education Act* was passed this past spring.

What action has been taken to address this issue since the *Education Act* was passed?

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

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

I don't know if the Member from Stratford-Kinlock was in the House the day that I made my ministerial statement on a \$1.3 million investment bringing in 30 individuals, whether it be EAs, youth service workers, or individuals to support children with unique needs in the system. That would be a reflection to the response.

But the Member from Stratford-Kinlock understands that we work on budget cycles. I will reassure all the Members of the Legislative Assembly that providing additional supports and growing and looking at way that we can meet the needs of children with special needs will be top of mind in our department in the budget process.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Autism assessments and private psychologists

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

When the education minister was in the health portfolio he worked to expand the role of private audiologists, and he knew, in fact, that they could play a role to help reduce long wait time for services.

Again, a question to the minister of education: Has the minister considered adopting a similar approach with private psychologists to help cut down the long wait times for school-aged autism assessments?

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

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

I want to reiterate, I recognize the wait times for the formal psycho-educational assessments are long, but also I want to reiterate that students that are currently on

those wait lists are getting day to day supports and getting a volume of supports from the 367 EAs, the eight staff that work in autism that consult with our early year centres, the eight staff that consult with teachers and resource teachers.

We are working diligently. I have great respect for individuals that work in the area of special education.

As I alluded to earlier, we're ahead of the question from the Member from Stratford-Kinlock, and we are looking at ways to reduce that formal access – to a formal assessment in psychology, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

One of the hardest parts of the long wait times for students is the anxiety it causes the parents, and the children, of course, as well.

The longer the wait times drag on, the more helpless parents feel to try and help their children. I believe, we all believe on this side of the House, that an expanded role for private psychologists to help cut down wait times is worth trying. I've spoken to many of them and they are willing. They want to be on the frontline. They want to help these children.

Again, question to the minister: Minister, will you commit here today to exploring, at the very least, a pilot project like this to reduce wait times for school-aged autism assessments and, once and for all, get rid of this three-year wait list?

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

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

That work is well underway inside the departments. We have had numerous conversations. We're also having conversations with other government departments to look at ways that we can address – I mean, that's the work we do in government. We have issues, we have problems, and we work at resolving them.

Currently, I do want to reiterate that there are some good things going on right now with supports. We spend over \$700,000 for one-on-one care with children with unique needs. We also, basically, have children that access the Disability Support Program.

We allot \$6,600 to Island families. I think there's approximately 140 students right now that receive additional resources to help support them outside of the classroom as well, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Speech language pathology wait list

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a parent, nothing tugs at my heart more than a child in need. As an MLA, little frustrates me more. At the school family meetings across the Island a common theme heard by our MLAs was poor access to specialist services like speech language pathology.

Question to the education minister: How many kids are on a wait list for speech language pathology in Island schools?

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

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

We're hearing the conversation very clearly. I do want to allude to an initiative that was implemented back in 2008 between the department of education and the department of health in respect to OT services that's currently in the Queens region, and we're very committed. We're working on an initiative right now to look at services, expanding services in the west and expanding services in the east.

We'll be paying very close attention. We are listening. We are hearing from schools. We talked about this school review process. Part of the reason why we are conducting reviews of the schools is to make sure that we can find the resources and support these concerns that are being heard all across the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, you didn't answer that question at all.

Question to the education minister: How long is the current wait time for speech language pathology in Island schools?

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

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

I'll bring the exact wait time. As the minister I don't have the operational answers to all those questions, but they're good questions. We'll bring that information back.

We're working at addressing our wait times. As minister, I clearly understand. I'm not going to sit here and pretend that I'm oblivious to any of these questions. These are wait times that are concerning. We continue to invest. The investments that we made in – a recent investment of \$1.3 million is exactly to address and to provide supports for children that are on a wait list before the formal assessment.

There's a lot of great work going on in the whole area of student services. We're spending over \$40 million. As I always say, there's more to work to do, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've heard stories about families going through the emotional rollercoaster of knowing your child needs helps, but you're stuck on a wait list for months.

Question to the education minister: What do you say to families like this who are stuck in an endless holding pattern to get help for their kids?

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

Mr. Currie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I recognize the reality of some of these conversations. I meet regularly, not only with families from my own constituency, but I meet with all Islanders and families. We do it regularly.

I work very closely with the Public Schools Branch and I have great confidence in their leadership, in Julie Gaudet, in respect to the way she manages the pressures and responsibilities that she has.

As government, we're committing to supporting the division of student services to continue not only to grow the supports, like we demonstrated recently with our \$1.3 million investment, but looking at ways that we can collaborate and consult and bring in teachers to provide the best access we can, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Classroom support roadblocks

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've also heard stories about families so frustrated with the waits they paid thousands of dollars to get help privately, then they find roadblocks in transferring that help into the classroom.

Question to the education minister: Why would a family that spends thousands of dollars for private specialists have to face roadblocks using the support for their kids?

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

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

I, too, have had those conversations and have those conversations with families that run – I'm not sure about the roadblock. We can get some information and more clarity on what he's referring to as a roadblock.

But currently we have supports in place. We provide Island children with autism and families with over \$6,600. We spend over \$700,000 to provide grants for one-on-one

supports, after-school hours, and work very closely to support respite care.

There is work going on and it's an ongoing reality of the public school system. We're identifying more children coming in with needs than there are leaving, but I'm very committed to continue to grow and expand the inclusion model here in the province.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Portability between public and private specialist help

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the education minister: Why isn't there more portability between public and private specialist help for services like speech language pathology?

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

Mr. Currie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We recognize and we are looking at initiatives right now to look at ways to support better access for a range of services, whether it be psycho-educational assessments or whether it be access to speech language pathologists. We are looking at other models and other options.

I'm very much right now engaged in our budget process. We all know the importance of doing the best we can with the resources we have, but we're committed to looking at ways that we can reach more children with the resources that we do have, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the education minister: Why are you penalizing families' financially for looking out for their kids?

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

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

I'm not sure of the question of penalizing. I mean, parents do have the choice in some situations where if they have the means to look at additional supports for children, but the province, through the department of health and the department of education, we're looking at ways through investments in IBI investments.

As I say, we've grown. If you look at the investments and the changes in the resources that we have now to support children with special needs, as I alluded to, we have over 360 EAs. We've got autism consultants that provide work on the ground with families directly on intervention. We've got staff inside the Public Schools Branch. We've got more youth service workers than we have in the past. We are evolving as a system to meet the needs of the growing pressures that are in place to support a strong inclusion model, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Telemedicine

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

According to the 2015 Canadian TeleHealth Report, Prince Edward Island lags far behind most other Canadian provinces on the adoption of telemedicine services.

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: What is your department doing to bring modern telemedicine services to Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Actually, telehealth is a modern use of technology that we can use and utilize within our health care system, and in fact we actually do utilize telehealth. I think there's a telehealth service that's in Western Hospital and I believe Souris Hospital too, but I'd stand corrected.

But I know there are a number of facilities that do use that, and that allows physicians to access other services and consult with other physicians in other locations on a particular patient's issue, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Local health services are indeed a critical factor in developing and maintaining vibrant rural communities and by making better use of telemedicine we have a really big opportunity to improve access to health care services in rural areas and keep rural health facilities open, and basically just generally improve the well-being of Islanders in our rural communities.

Question to the minister: What do you think are the barriers to implementing telemedicine more widely in rural Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: As I said, Mr. Speaker, we do utilize telehealth services.

We do have some facilities. We do not have all six of our facilities accessible to Telehealth. I guess ultimately the barriers to that would be the financial resources and trying to stretch the resources that we have with all the asks that we get in our department.

But telehealth is something that we see as an advantage to rural health care facilities and, once again, we will continue to look at utilizing those services.

I might reiterate that if we do have one facility that has telehealth in one region or whatever, it doesn't mean that other physicians can't access that service. It's just a matter of how far people want to drive to get that service, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

A barrier I don't believe should be financial because the long-term savings to the health care system in more fully implementing telemedicine would be enormous, so it's sort of a – it would be a wonderful investment.

I'll tell you what the real barrier is, it's reliable broadband Internet access. That's what the real problem is in delivering modern telemedicine services to all of rural Prince Edward Island.

Since responsibility for rural broadband, of course, falls with the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, your two departments would have to collaborate in order to make this work properly.

Telemedicine interdepartmental meetings

Can I ask you, minister, how many meetings you or your staff have had with their counterparts in the Department of Economic Development and Tourism to explore the opportunities that better broadband connectivity could create for the delivery of rural health services in PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, our department has had consultations to deliver more high-tech services to our facilities across Prince Edward Island.

One of them is the implementation of Wi-Fi in all our hospitals across the province. Some of those facilities access that through community service. I believe Souris got the – the Lion's Club played a role in helping with that.

Once again, we have the chance to consult at Cabinet and caucus to talk about the issues when it comes to rural broadband services, and it is a limitation in some cases, but we still access all those services as best we can, Mr. Speaker.

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

Diabetes test strips

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is directed to the Minister of Health and Wellness. The 2016 report on diabetes on Prince Edward Island states that 32% of the provincial population is living with diabetes or pre-diabetes.

Minister, are you planning to revise the current policy for blood glucose test strips for people with diabetes to expand coverage and ensure all Islanders with diabetes have the needed strips for optimal management of their diabetes?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for that question.

In regards to – recently, I think, believe, November was diabetes month and we all, as MLAs, had the opportunity to meet with the diabetes association and we have done good things for the diabetic community.

We've added diabetic strips to the system, insulin pumps for children. We have a nurse practitioner that provides services for individuals with diabetes that are not on – don't have a family doctor and we will continue to do more.

I am looking at trying to see what we can do to improve the groups that access diabetic strips.

Mr. Aylward: (Indistinct) family doctor (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: They've got a nurse practitioner.

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

Financial coverage for people with type 1 diabetes

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, your department has done a great job with regard to financial coverage for insulin pumps for those under the age of 18.

Are there plans to expand the financial coverage for insulin pumps and supplies to all individuals with type 1 diabetes, regardless of age?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, I have had the opportunity to have consultations with staff at Health PEI and myself to review the issue around better services and improved programs for people with diabetes in this province.

We do see that the potential of growth for people being diagnosed with diabetes is increasing. When I look at the insulin pump program there are some jurisdictions that have gone up to age 26 for individuals accessing the insulin pump. My department is really reviewing that and seeing what we can do, if we can find the fiscal resources to enhance programs for people with diabetes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Water act update

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. LaVie: All right.

Mr. Dumville: Yes.

The government has recognized that water is a valuable public resource and it's in the process of public consultations. Would the minister please advise at what stage your department is with the water act?

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

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

That is a great question from the Member from West Royalty-Springvale, and he does a super job of contacting me with issues from his residents in his area. I know water issue is a big concern in his riding. Thank you for bringing that forward, hon. member.

It is a pleasure for me to update the status of the water act progress to the members of the Legislature today and those that may be watching. Probably all of you will recall that back in the spring session I had indicated that I would like to see, as minister, the draft act to be posted online first week of

December, which obviously has passed us. Our legislative writers, we've been keeping them very busy with writing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Minister, when could we expect the water act, the legislation, to be introduced in this Assembly?

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was indicating, the draft act is about a month behind getting posted online with the significant amount of work the legislative writers have been doing. Once it gets posted online, around the first week of January, we will allow Islanders to take a month or so to kind of digest that, tear it apart a bit, analyze it, and then we'll begin the second round of public consultations around mid-February and hopefully get it tabled in the spring session.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Souris dunes

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The transportation department built a wall to protect the Souris causeway.

Question to the minister of transportation: What is your plan to save the dunes?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, the Souris bridge, which was completed last year at a cost of about 8 million. Unfortunately, as I mentioned, that is a very delegate area subject to a lot of damage from the storms that we've had. We have built a protective wall along the causeway there, along the dunes, to encourage more dune growth. As a result of

having the fence there we are having some success with that and we will continue to monitor it.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister of transportation, you promised the people of eastern Kings a phase 2. When will phase 2 start?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We did have a consultant work with us on what would be the best way to approach the issues that are affecting the dunes along the Souris causeway area. We will continue to put together the second phase plan on that.

As soon as we have that finalized we'll make sure that we are continuing our discussions with the community. We understand it's a very big concern to them and to the town of Souris and we will continue those discussions.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the minister of transportation: Yes or no, is the funding in place for phase 2?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is part of a project that is ongoing and we will continue to ensure that we address those issues and we will keep the member and the community updated on what our plans will be.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I told this minister exactly what would happen when you built the wall. Nobody would listen. The sand dunes are gone, they're washed away, gone. No phase 2, so they're gone. They left.

To the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Minister, when does your department plan to deal with the destruction of the sensitive dune system at the Souris causeway?

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

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

When that event occurred I did take a drive to Souris and view what was going on there. The hon. member knows that we were part of that process. To the best of my recollection, the process that was used was supported and endorsed by a world-renowned engineer that actually spent some time in that area during the summer months that said it would be a very effective method and that's the method that he would have suggested and has been used in other areas.

We, as the department, will continue to monitor and be part of the process and aid in any way that we can moving forward, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, a question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: When this took place did your department even get a call from the transportation department?

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

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Actually, phase 1 of the project has been completed, which consists of the

construction of 200 metres sea wall. Work on phase 2 is continuing, hon. member, and that consists of installing measures to resist erosion, and we will continue to work with the community on that.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister talks about phase 2. They should have done phase 2 like they promised the people when they came to Souris with a public meeting. The people told them: No phase 2. The dunes are gone; they washed away.

Now, to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: What are your plans to restore the dunes at the Souris causeway?

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, there was a public information session held in Souris on February 25th, 2016. Mike Davies, coastal engineer with Coldwater Consulting, presented the assessment of the area and how we would move forward with the remediation and suggested alignment of the seawall, and the residents felt that the seawall should be placed in front of the existing dune system.

We will continue to work on phase 2 of helping with the abatement of the issues that we're having in Souris.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've just seen some terrible events just happen at West Point Lighthouse, the same seawall that's built at the Souris causeway, and seen what happened at West Point Lighthouse, it's washed out.

To the minister of transportation: I understand you built a wall to protect the road. We have to protect the road. It's the main entrance into all eastern Kings, I get that, you protected your road. But are you scared that the same thing is going to happen

at the causeway in Souris as what has just happened at West Point Lighthouse?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Any time there is a serious event as occurred from a storm which erodes our dunes area on Prince Edward Island, of course, we're always concerned. We will continue to work on protecting that particular area and we will continue to work with the town of Souris on it.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is the main road to eastern Kings. It's tourism for eastern Kings. You just found \$65 million to build a new highway when you can't protect your old highways.

To the minister of transportation: What are your plans to protect the dunes at Souris causeway today?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We will be working with the Department of Communities, Land and Environment to ensure that the best remediation plan is put in place and to protect the future of that causeway. We have every confidence in the work of our engineers and in work in consultation with the town of Souris that we will continue to protect that particular piece of infrastructure and are very aware of the effects that our climate change is having on all of our areas around Prince Edward Island. We recognize it is a serious problem that we all, as Islanders, need to work together on to ensure that they're protected.

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

Mi'kmaq Confederacy loan standing

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Finance, when he was the minister of innovation prior to the last election, stood in this House and told us that the loan to the Confederacy for egaming was in good standing when in fact the actual loan agreement itself says that within 120 days at the end of a year they have to submit audited financial statements, which they didn't do.

A question to the minister who's responsible for the Premier's office today: Why is it that the current Minister of Finance, who's now responsible internally by the Premier to clean up the mess in government, told this House that that loan was in good standing when it wasn't?

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The egaming initiative in two thousand and I believe it was eight, and the parameters around it, we've addressed several times in this House. We've acted quickly on all recommendations as it related to the Auditor General's report and will continue to do so.

This government has done everything in its power to be transparent and accountable to the people of PEI on this issue. The Premier has come out and stressed and stated that this is not the way this government does business. We were elected on a mandate, Mr. Speaker, to be accountable, and that's exactly what we're doing, and we're moving forward.

Thank you.

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

Deleted government email accounts (further)

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Starting 14 days after missing that agreement there was a \$100 fine supposed to be imposed per week after that. The Minister of Finance stood in this House when he was minister of innovation, he said over and over again that this loan was in good standing. I have the loan document here today, the agreement, and it says that's not the case. It was not in good standing because they

didn't submit their financial audits like they were supposed to to government.

Question to the minister of tourism. You like to answer questions, then today's your day: Whose emails were deleted?

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to reiterate the process that we've followed to date and some of the things that we've done as a government to ensure that we're accountable to the people of PEI and we're transparent in every matter, that in every decision that we're making –

Mr. Aylward: Then answer a question.

Mr. MacDonald: There's conflict of interest that we've brought in. Ethics and integrity, whistleblower legislation, lobbyist legislation to come, *Financial Administration Act* review, disclosing write-offs which the opposition wanted. We're doing reevaluation of records management.

What else can the government do to move forward in a positive manner –

An Hon. Member: Tell the truth!

Mr. Myers: Answer the question!

Mr. MacDonald: – based on issues of 2008, 2009, 2011 that this opposition keeps going back to?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[End of Question Period]