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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

WEDNESDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2016

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Police review ideal

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Yesterday the Premier released the police review report, something I've advocated for. In comments after the release of the review the Premier said: There is a need to move forward and build, working with the existing police services to build a new ideal.

Question to the Premier and the Attorney General: Can you elaborate on what you mean when you say a new ideal?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question, and for his interest and advocacy on this subject, including participation in the technical briefing yesterday.

When the review was started back in February – for the first time in 40 years an Island-wide review – the words cohesive, integrated, and efficient were used. The consultants who worked on this and conducted many interviews came back to report that while we have a small province, small population, and effective and appreciated police services, the system is currently disjointed.

Let me say more jointed, and I'm prepared to expand on that, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Premier's vision of policing

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Premier's vagueness can mean a lot of things. We've learned this during the session.

Question to the Premier: Can you explain to the House what your vision of policing in PEI should look like?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, let me begin by saying that it's building on our strengths.

In an extensive survey with Prince Edward Islanders the consultants found that 82% of respondents strongly agreed that they feel safe in their communities during the day, 61% at night. I think we could improve on that. They also found that 75% believe that police in PEI do a good job and an additional 22% would rate them as doing an average job. In our business, I think if we got up into the range of 97% we'd be pretty pleased.

In particular, we outlined, and on the response to the consultant's recommendation, that there would be a number of initiatives that the police would take, including standards and joint teams, and that there will be an implementation committee among the agencies to work on that, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Police review concerns

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

One of the review's recommendations was for a stronger communication between the police services in the province. Yet some of the early feedback I've heard from police forces is a concern against the report and that it does not give the true picture of policing in the province.

Question to the Premier and the Attorney General: Will you commit today to address the concerns against this report and to ensure a true picture is outlined to Islanders of Prince Edward Island in regards to policing?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, I took part in the session yesterday, and the

consultants and provincial officials met this morning with one of the main policing services in the province and are meeting this afternoon with another of the main policing services in the province.

It's exactly in that spirit that all parties involved are working together and intend to work together, notably through the implementation committee, to ensure that we build on our strengths. That it's not a matter of finding fault with anything that's been done in the past, but that we work together to have effective, efficient, and integrated policing services including for the safety of the officers.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Securities commission and egaming briefing

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

One of the most secretive elements of this government's egaming scandal has been the shenanigans around the PEI securities commission.

Question to the Premier who is also the minister responsible for the securities commission: Premier, when were you first briefed on the activities of the securities commission investigation into your government's secret egaming business partner?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, I would not, in the normal course, as minister be briefed on an investigation by the securities commission, but I became aware as was made evident in comments I made earlier in this session, in the late summer of 2015 of the interactions between the securities commission and the Auditor General.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Premier says in around the summertime.

I guess my question to the Premier would be – the *Globe and Mail* published a national exposé on your government's egaming scandal. Are you telling us here today that you had no briefing in or around that time?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, I remind the hon. member that I was not the minister of justice at the time to which he is referring, although I did read the *Globe and Mail*, the issue to which he refers.

I was aware, as Premier, that there was a serious misrepresentation in the headline in that piece which used the reference 001 as if that was the first time this province had ever dealt with securities matters. We've been doing that for decades and doing it very responsibly. I'm proud of the work that our superintendent of securities and the team did on that particular matter, and do on an everyday basis.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Securities commission case number

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm glad the Premier remembers that, at the very least, he was Premier when this exposé hit the national news.

In the fall of 2012, the securities commission conducted an investigation into this government's secret egaming business partner.

Question again to the Premier: How many cases did the security commission investigate and hold hearings on before the infamous hearing detailed in the *Globe and Mail*?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, that's precisely the point that I was making in my reference to 001.

The securities commission was reconstituted and reformed. I wasn't either the Premier or the minister of justice at the time. In its new format this was the first case which is why the *Globe and Mail* took the liberty of referring to it as 001.

But I'll say as a citizen of Prince Edward Island we should all object to that misrepresentation of the work of our public service, or the business that's done here in our province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Securities commission investigative hearing

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Again, I find it ironic that this Premier didn't receive, at the very least, a briefing as Robert Ghiz was sneaking out the front door, as you were walking in the front door.

It's worth noting that this hearing into government's egaming partner was the first time that the securities commission ever held a tribunal in a case.

Again, question to the Premier: Don't you find it curious that the only time the securities commission ever held an investigative hearing that it was into your secret egaming business partner?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, I would say, given all of the adjectives that were associated with the question, I find it totally upstanding and correct that the superintendent of securities and the securities commission acted as they did in this matter, and indeed, their work led to the imposition of sanctions, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Securities commission and investor

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

At the heart of the securities commission investigation was a complaint that your government's secret egaming business partner had swindled a local retired investor who was terminally ill. The problem was, though, that this terminally ill investor didn't exist. She was made up.

Again, question to the Premier: Why would your government's security commission launch an investigation because of a false complaint on behalf of a fictional terminally ill investor?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, the securities commission – and I remind the House that these questions are being asked regarding a timeframe before I was in office or a member of this House – but the securities commission operates with a necessary degree of independence that attaches to investigative bodies and, in turn, to regulatory bodies.

From what I know of the file, and it's mainly what other citizens would know, and what I've come to know through the work of the Auditor General, the work of the securities commission in this matter was totally correct and timely, and led to results and to the imposition of sanctions.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Securities commission and sealed records

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Obviously the Premier believes that the media person that wrote this story in the *Globe and Mail*, is not telling the truth, that this complainant was fabricated. Perhaps you should take that up directly with the *Globe and Mail* outside the rail and see if they want to deal with that directly with you in the courts.

Bogus complaints from phantom investors – that seems like a flimsy pretense to haul your government's secret egaming business

partner into a securities commission tribunal.

Again, question to the Premier: Are the records of this securities commission's investigation sealed?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, on the point that the hon. member raised about the *Globe and Mail*, that report appeared on Saturday, and on the following Wednesday this matter was turned over to the Auditor General.

On the question of the records of investigations and how those are maintained by the securities commission, to my knowledge they are indeed safely kept.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Securities commission records and Auditor General

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

Again, question to the Premier: Were the records of your government securities commission investigation into your government's secret gaming business partner provided to the Auditor General?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, I'm aware that following late September 2015 the Auditor General spent I'll say a considerable amount of time, I don't know precisely how much, with the superintendent of securities and with access to the information to which she desired to have access.

From reading the Auditor General's report it's my assumption, my conclusion, that she was given access to documents and otherwise to officials as she wished to complete her investigation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Securities commission and sealed records (further)

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

The Premier says that it's his assumption, his conclusion. Well, Mr. Premier, we all know what they say about assuming things. I'll leave that at there.

This investigation came at a cost to taxpayers. The records of this investigation should be made public.

Question again to the Premier: Will you unseal these records and publicly release them?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, there is a reason why the superintendent of securities and, in turn, the commission has the independence that it does in the conduct of an investigation, in the conduct of hearings, and in the regulation of the sector, but in particular dealing with particular cases.

It's not my role as the minister that reports to this House on the work of the securities commission to start throwing their records about.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Electoral system referendum

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Rather than allow his caucus a free vote on the plebiscite results, the Premier said that they spent around 12 hours discussing the issue in private.

Premier, is this where the idea for a referendum came from?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member's on the low side in terms of the number of hours that we spent discussing this, but we did so in the spirit of free exchange and open exchange, and it's something I'd commend –

Mr. Myers: That's not what I heard. It's not what your members are saying.

Premier MacLauchlan: – to other caucuses in this House –

Mr. Myers: Not what your caucus says.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and we reached a consensus –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) head down.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and indeed we did resolve that the best way forward for the people of this province was for there to be the referendum.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

See, this is one of the major reasons why Islanders are so concerned over what a potential referendum question will look like. At the end of the day it's going to be the Liberal caucus that decides what the question and what the options are going to be.

Premier, do you think it's right that you and your caucus get to choose what the second option will be on the referendum question?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, the question that is being referred to by the hon. member is fully in the public domain.

It's well known to Prince Edward Islanders, it's well known to those who voted in the plebiscite and those that didn't vote in the plebiscite. It's known to the 27 members of this House. You can read it in the public media and in the social media.

I would encourage all 27 members of this House to look forward to the forthcoming period to engage with Islanders and to put forward proposals, and to listen and learn. It's through that process, and ultimately through the approval of this House, that we will determine that second option.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Premier likes to say that it'll be this Legislature that will choose the options on the referendum question, but he's playing with words here. He wouldn't allow a free vote of his 18 Liberal MLAs on the plebiscite motion put forward, he got together with the 18 Liberal MLAs to decide that a referendum was needed, and now he's going to use the 18 Liberal MLAs to decide what the second option will be.

Premier, do you think it's fair to pretend that the opposition or Islanders will have a say in what this referendum question will look like when really, in the end, it's just going to be what your caucus decides?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, I would say it's fair and accurate, and I would say aspirational, and I feel badly that any member of this House would say that they don't expect to play a part in that process with your constituents, with Islanders, with people that have taken a sincere interest in this and will continue to.

As I have said on other occasions, the level of engagement by Prince Edward Islanders on this issue is, today, higher than it was any time up to and including the night of the vote. I strongly urge everyone in this House to encourage Islanders to take a serious interest in this so we'll get the best possible result –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) 37,000 Islanders (Indistinct).

Mr. Myers: You said that on the plebiscite.

Premier MacLauchlan: The best possible result from the referendum.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

But Premier, how can you say that? How can you say that it'll be decided by everyone when you've already showed that the vote was whipped and you decided internally, behind closed doors, to have this referendum?

Premier, how can Islanders trust it won't be just another Liberal caucus decision on the second option?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, I must say to the member opposite, how can you say that your role as a member of the Legislature doesn't amount to anything?

Mr. LaVie: He asks the questions, not you.

Premier MacLauchlan: Get out there and do the work. Talk to your constituents. Talk with Islanders.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)!

Premier MacLauchlan: Learn, listen, read. There's a lot of work that we have to do on this, and there's a lot of good research and study and listening and discernment, and I encourage everybody in this House to get to work.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

You can see why the Premier's actions on democratic renewal over the past month have left many Islanders perplexed and frustrated. Here we have a group of 18 MLAs, many of whom might not even be running in the next election, deciding

options for a referendum to be held on an election three years away using, perhaps, entirely different districts to decide on a voting system that may not even come into effect for another eight years. My son in grade 4 is going to have his license by the time this all plays out.

Premier, how does this timetable make any sense?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Maybe the hon. member's son could give him a lesson in mathematics. I don't know how he ever got to eight years on the timetable that he's talking about.

But in any event, Madam Speaker, the timetable that I think every one of us and all Islanders should have in mind is the next 12 months, to have a rich, discerning, informed, and engaged discussion about what that referendum can do, and I'd say in particular, to those who served on the special committee, to look for a chance to give Islanders an opportunity to express a clear choice.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I will resist the temptation to follow up on that series of questions, but –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Provincial beach water quality

Dr. Bevan-Baker: There have been some disturbing reports coming out of New Brunswick recently, about water quality at some of their beaches on the Northumberland coast. Dangerously high levels of human fecal bacteria were detected at Parlee and Murray beaches, high enough that they should have closed those beaches down.

Here on Prince Edward Island, we regularly see fish kills and shellfish closures due to sewage discharge or leaching, which seems to have been the problem in New Brunswick.

Does government monitor water quality at our provincial beaches to make sure that they are safe for swimmers?

Speaker: Who are you directing your question to?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Madam Speaker, I'm unsure as to whether this falls under Communities, Land and Environment, tourism, or Agriculture and Fisheries, so whichever department is responsible.

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It is a great question, hon. member. It's one that it's my understanding that the federal Government of Canada has a part to play in those. I do believe that periodically, from time to time, we do get calls concerning things washing up on shores on our Island beaches, and we do attend and we do inspections.

As far as water testing goes I'd have to bring that back to you, hon. member, as to the tests that were performed, and I'd be willing to do that as soon as I get that information.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Inspections are not monitoring, and I can tell the House that we do not currently monitor our water quality on Prince Edward Island beaches. At the risk of stating the obvious, beaches are incredibly important to PEI tourism. We can't protect our beaches and the people who use them if we don't monitor the water quality there.

A situation such as the one that happened in Parlee and Murray beaches in New Brunswick, where fecal bacteria have been found at dangerous levels, could have a

devastating impact on our tourism industry here on Prince Edward Island.

Since we are not monitoring water quality, is government doing anything else to protect water quality at our Island beaches?

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am not at liberty of the information of Parlee beach, but I do know on events that happened right here in Prince Edward Island that happened last year in the Stratford region. DFO did shut down the fishery and did shut down the use of the harbour in Charlottetown, so that's the normal case.

When an occurrence like that would happen, DFO would indicate the action taken as far as the fisheries is concerned.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Indeed, following the discharge into the Hillsborough River we did shut down the shellfish fishery there. But we did nothing to monitor Tea Hill beach or the beaches in my district, District 17, on the south shore where this inevitably would have ended up.

If we can't monitor water quality, how can we assure tourists or Islanders that our beaches are safe to use? We need to address this issue before a problem like the one that occurred in New Brunswick happens here on Prince Edward Island.

Will this government commit to begin water testing at Island beaches before the next summer holiday season?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans does do the testing. They send the word out.

If there is an issue they put a posting on the shoreline so that anyone who visits the shoreline can see that this area is to some degree contaminated and there's no fishing or considered swimming in that area as well. The postings are put up and the announcements are made, and when that time is lifted the announcements are made quite open to the public.

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

Fentanyl use

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The rise in fentanyl use across Canada over the past year has been identified as a health crisis. It is being used to feed addictions right across this country and it is killing users daily. Our province is not immune to this crisis. Can the Minister of Health and Wellness provide the House with any data on the use of fentanyl in this province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Yes, our government understands the toll that the changing face of addictions is having on Island families here. We do know that fentanyl and other opioids are prescribed here in Prince Edward Island, and we also know that some street varieties have been confiscated here in Prince Edward Island and have been abused in other provinces.

Our department has warranted the chief public health officer and the provincial epidemiologist to make sure they are monitoring the uses and misuses of fentanyl in this province. They are reviewing the different process as to how many – or the diagnoses, how many – the frequency of those prescriptions.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Can the minister update the House on what his department or what the government is doing to educate the public and health officials around this deadly opioid?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Actually in this House, if you can just recall not too long ago, we passed the *Narcotics Safety Awareness Act* which makes sure that any fentanyl products are returned back to the pharmacies before other prescriptions are refilled. We have the drug information system. We also have an opiate replacement therapy program, otherwise known as our methadone clinics. There are four of them across the province. We also are working with the medical society to deal with a position called choosing wisely for the prescription and prescribing of those such opioids.

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

Naloxone

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Naloxone is a prescription treatment that can be used by family members or caregivers to treat a person known or suspected to have an opioid overdose. My question to the minister is: What is the government's policy on providing this drug to the public?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Yes, this is a very serious issue in our province, or the potential of being in our province. Naloxone has been basically told to all our acute care facilities to make sure they have that antidote on hand, and all our Island EMS trucks, and we've also trained all our paramedics to be able to administer Naloxone. We are going to have some discussions on dealing with the general public on how we may roll more Naloxone out across the province.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Senior social isolation

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

In the recent by-election in Summerside-Wilmot I visited many seniors in their kitchens and on their doorsteps. They told me they need more support.

To the Minister of Family and Human Services. Some of our Island seniors are at risk of social isolation and loneliness, especially this time of year. Can the minister please update the House on what is being done to help reduce social isolation of seniors in the province at this time of year and all year long?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

That is a great question and I thank the hon. member for asking it. It's a question I feel that each and every one of us should be asking ourselves each and every day.

Anyone is susceptible to social isolation, but seniors more especially so. They have more challenges with their health. They have challenges with maybe the loss of a loved one. Challenges with transportation, they are at high risk and our seniors – the Prince Edward Island Seniors Secretariat do have a number of programs that help alleviate social isolation with seniors.

One of them would be the Friendly Visitor Program. We also have the Men's Shed Program which is out of Slemon Park, and a new one that's going to be launched very soon is the PEI telephone line, the party line, and that is friendship over the phone for those that cannot make it out of their home.

I encourage anyone and everyone to call the seniors' helpline and they can find that phone number on our website, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Madam Speaker, with a view to evidence-based management and best practice research: Minister, what is being done to identify additional supports to reduce the risk of social isolation?

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

Ms. Mundy: Another great question, Madam Speaker.

Social isolation is not unique to Prince Edward Island. It is a concern across the country and as minister responsible for seniors, I am in contact with my federal, provincial, and territorial ministers on a regular basis. Social isolation is a topic that has come up quite often.

We have been getting together what we call a tool kit and that will be resources and information and ideas for communities to help to reduce isolation for seniors across the country. We hope to have that roll out very shortly and I look forward to sharing it with the House very soon.

My grandmother always said that God gave us two hands. One was for helping ourselves and one was for helping others. I encourage each and every one of us in this House, as well as across the Island, especially at this time of the year, to reach out and help those in their community.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

PISA challenge (further)

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Yesterday the minister got awful touchy, the minister of education, when I talked about the exclusion rate in the PISA test, 14.3% of Island students were screened out. It was the highest exclusion rate in all of Canada by a long shot. I also asked the minister about the PISA challenge that his department ran as part of their PISA strategy.

Question to the minister: How many students and parents took part in the PISA challenge test organized by your department?

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

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

Extremely proud of the success of our 15-year-olds with the international assessment, which I must add is a very rigorous assessment which over 72 countries globally participate in, and over 500,000 15-year-olds. Have great confidence in the department at the time, great confidence in the leadership of the English Language School Board at the time, and especially the confidence in the principals who provided oversight and followed their responsibilities to execute PISA, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm having a lot of trouble getting straight answers. Let me try this approach with the minister: Could you Tweet me a link to that PISA strategy?

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

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

As I shared with the House, I shared publicly, we've seen high levels of improvement in science, reading, and math which are core areas in knowledge. We've seen the largest improvement in Canada in every domain, the only significant improvement in the country in science and reading, and the highest equity in every domain which PEI is the Canadian leader in producing equitable education outcomes.

That's a reflection of the commitment and the dedication by our government as we continue to invest in quality education in this province to make sure that every province is leading from their front foot, and making sure we give them every opportunity we possibly can as they cross that stage in grade 10 and compete with every child not only in this province, in the region, and in the country, Madam Speaker.

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

PISA exclusions

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

So 14.3% of students were excluded and they were screened out of writing the PISA test, double the national average, and more than all of the 72 countries that took part.

Question to the minister of education: Why would PEI have four times as many students excluded as Kazakhstan?

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

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

The process is a very rigorous process, and as I indicated, I'm extremely confident in the principals and the board at the time that provided oversight.

Firstly, I want to acknowledge that Prince Edward Island is the only province in Canada that has all schools and all 15-year-olds that are part of the random sample size. There are larger provinces in this country that only allow 51% to 52% of their student populations and their entire school populations to participate. We are statistically sound on the results and the outcomes and continue to be extremely proud, and we need to start celebrating and acknowledging our successes as a province and standing proud that we're competing with the best.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's funny that the minister doesn't talk about his own provincial assessments and how we haven't gone up in the same period of time that we've gone up in the PISA scores. Why is it that our own provincial assessments don't go up but PISA does? There's something to be said about that. Having 14.3% of students excluded from

PISA might have something to do with that, actually.

Modified learning program

Question to the minister: How many of these 14.3% of excluded students are on a modified learning program?

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

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

As a former educator I spent a lot of time in the area of special education and was, at the time, and still am now as the minister, extremely proud of our inclusion model in the Province of Prince Edward Island. We teach to every child and we're extremely proud of our record on inclusion, and we make sure that we continue to invest in all children across the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Our recent investment of 1.3 million where we added 30 additional supports, whether it be EAs and youth service workers, we continue to stand firm and proud on our record on inclusion, and we teach to every child in every classroom across this province. We do not segregate and we do not separate children with unique needs, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The minister stands and he says how proud he is of his inclusion that excludes 14.3% of the students.

Question again to the minister: How does a student get put on a modified learning program?

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

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

The process to sample and randomly select, the first part gathers the names of the students that have 15-year-old students. We

sent all names forward. They are randomly selected. The next stage of the selection process samples students from within the selected schools. At that time the list of students is provided to the school, school authorities review the list and have to determine if students are special needs.

There are three provided codes to choose: functional disabled, cognitive behavioral or emotionally disabled, and limited assessment language experience for the third.

A student is on modified where IEPs by our systems definitions are considerable as eligible.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I guess maybe there's another sheet of paper you could read from because it wasn't at all what I asked you, I asked how you got put on a modified program.

Question to the minister: Are parents always notified when their child has been placed on a modified program?

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

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

We have children that learn and at times experience difficulties during the course of their K-12 experience. There are children where their curriculum is adapted, their curriculum is modified. It's very common practice in the public school system. That's why we continue to bring EAs. Today we've got about 370 education assistants that support children in Island classrooms and support teachers.

It's a very common practice that teachers and educational assistants and parents and students have a consultation in respect to how the progress and how the IEPs are administered.

I believe there's a signing of adapted and modified during parent-teacher interviews as well.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I suggest the Premier goes back to his staff, confirms that and brings it back to the House. He might be surprised what he finds.

Deleted government email accounts (further)

Question again to the minister of education: Whose emails were deleted?

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

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

Since we're on the topic of education, we're going to continue to talk about education. I want to talk about how proud I am to be part of a government that has put public education as a top priority.

Over the last 10 years we've increased education spending by over 75 million and we continue to make investments. We continue to (Indistinct) frontline teaching positions and we continue to make sure that we're not a pretender, but a contender, in public education in this country.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

North Lake bridge (further)

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I listened to the Premier during Question Period yesterday talk about the fishermen at North Lake and the farmers that are up east that pay taxes and keep our economy going.

Question to the transportation minister: Are you planning on replacing the bridge at North Lake?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Over the last number of years we have done a lot of upgrades to the North Lake bridge. We continue to monitor it. It is on weight restriction at the moment. We will continue to monitor that bridge.

All of our bridges are inspected on a bi-annual basis and we do an annual report on that. We will continue to monitor that particular bridge.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I understand you're monitoring the bridge, you've been doing that for the last 50 years, and you did repair work to it for four years. Now you have the bridge shut down to 5,500-pound weight.

To the minister of transportation: Are you planning, within the next year, to replace the bridge at North Lake, yes or no?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The assessment on replacing a bridge of the size of North Lake is approximately \$5 million and that's not in the upcoming Capital Budget.

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

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Question to the minister of transportation: Is that quote from one company or is that quote just your own company?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Our engineering department does a number of assessments. We work with the bridge engineers to do those inspections. Again, as

I said, it's estimated to be \$5 million and it's not in the Capital Budget.

We will continue, I want to assure the member, to monitor that particular bridge and ensure that it is safe to cross, and continue that monitoring process.

Thank you.

[End of Question Period]