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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

THURSDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2016

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Law Society of PEI re: Bill Dow (further)

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

On November the 16th the Premier was asked multiple times why he failed to report Bill Dow's double-dipping to the law society.

Question to the Premier: Have you officially reported this matter to the law society yet?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, this question is a continuation of what we've seen in Question Period endeavouring to throw anybody possible under the bus.

But let me say that following those questions I did make inquiries of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism with whom Mr. Dow had the relationship.

The deputy minister wrote to the Auditor General on the 21st of October. The deputy minister also following my inquiries, and the inquiries made in this House, obtained a legal opinion on the question that was raised.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Egaming accountability (further)

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

So he did not contact the law society.

Question to the Premier: Why does there continue to be no consequences for this egaming scandal under your rule?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, the question of lawyers and having situations where they manage conflicts of interest is not wrongdoing and it's not unusual.

The good lawyers and the best lawyers do this on an everyday basis, and they do that as part of their professional duty to their clients. It's not my role as attorney general to be the police person of Mr. Dow or others.

But I'm confident that the issue was raised with the deputy minister. The deputy minister was in correspondence with the Auditor General. I asked if she had any further information. She didn't. The deputy minister sought a legal opinion and I also understand, through officials, that Mr. Dow has himself contacted the law society.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Law Society of PEI re: Bill Dow (further)

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I think it comes down to a duty to report as a person of responsibility.

Government changed Treasury Board contracting guidelines the week after we raised these concerns about contracts and conflicts of interest.

Question to the Premier: Why change the guidelines, but not report the dealings of Mr. Dow, a Liberal insider, as uncovered by the Auditor General?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, let me very clear: Mr. Dow did work for the government on this file.

When he became aware of a conflict he withdrew from the file. He notified the client which is exactly what lawyers do, and has subsequently responded appropriately. We have pursued that from the perspective of the client and obtained a legal opinion on that.

But on the question of reinforcing the guidelines, we're happy to do that as we have responded to the other recommendations of the Auditor General in endeavouring to ensure that we're giving good government and taking the Auditor General's advice.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As me, as the chief of police, if I have knowledge of something that is wrongdoing, then it's an onus to me to provide the agency that deals with it of the complaint or make them aware of it.

As both the Premier and the Attorney General, I would have expected this be taken more seriously, especially as a former dean of law.

Question to the Premier. You have a duty to report, as Premier and attorney general. The law society – I make this point very well – the law society will be notified about this.

Question to the Premier: The only question is whether you will do it or I will do it.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, the duty that I have as attorney general is to report wrongdoing.

Mr. MacKay: You're not doing a very good job of that.

Premier MacLauchlan: The members of the legal profession in this province, as part of their professional work, manage their conflicts of interest. The attorney general is not the police of how lawyers manage their conflicts of interest.

This was done in an appropriate fashion and we have a legal opinion to back that up, so if the leader of the unreliable opposition wants –

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Premier MacLauchlan: – to make a complaint he can go ahead and do it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

FHS minister and FOIPP material

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

On December 7th I asked the Minister of Family and Human Services questions about budget under-spending in the home reno program. The minister took those questions as notice. The next day the minister rose to say that her department actually overspent the home reno budget last year, and we're on track to spend the full amount his year.

Question to the minister: Why does the answer you gave to this House contradict information that your department provided in a freedom of information request?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The information that the FOIPP request, a request received in August 2016, includes the projects only and invoices paid up to the point of the request, so they were paid up to the end of August 2016: \$47,000 had been paid for the 2016 intake and \$839,000 for the 2015 intake, a total of 886,000. All projects had not been completed or billed by contractors at that time.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We asked for the information through FOIPP and we understand that 833,000 was spent last year out of a budget of 1.1 million, and you actually said to the House that 1.26 million was spent.

Why would there be close to half a million dollars difference between what we got as a FOIPP request for last year versus what you said was spent?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Homeowners receive the funding when the project is complete. It's not uncommon for a project to be approved in one year and not paid out till the next year, till the next fiscal year. We like to work with our homeowners, as well as the contractors. There are often delays, and we would hate to retract funding that we had promised to somebody for whatever the delay might be, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Let's talk about the current year. We were told that \$50,000 has been spent year to date with another 97 projects that have not been processed. From the information that we've received, I think we would look at – \$49,000 is what we heard, to be precise, was spent year to date.

Are you saying that over \$1.25 million was spent on home reno projects between when we got the FOIPP reply and when the minister made her House statement? Where has the money gone? You said it's all spent, but there are only 97 projects. That does not total \$1.25 million.

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

Ms. Mundy: Current spending – again, are we talking the current fiscal year or the previous fiscal year, Madam Speaker?

An Hon. Member: Current.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you. As I stated, for the current year you said there were 97 projects that were approved but have not been completed. Ninety-seven projects plus the \$49,000 does not equal \$1.25 million.

Could the minister explain where that money went?

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

Ms. Mundy: Madam Speaker, as I said, we work with the contractors and the homeowners.

We are committed to these home renovation projects. We committed to spending an additional \$250,000 in the PEI home repair program in the fiscal year 2016-2017, and we work with the contractors as well as the homeowners. It is not uncommon for a project to be approved in one year and paid out in the following year. But the monies will be spent. The monies have been committed, and the monies will be spent.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Thank you, minister, for that answer. But, could you please explain to me why in the FOIPP request there's only \$833,000 spent for last year when you said you spent \$1.25 million? How does that happen?

We're looking at a FOIPP request. We've seen it time and time again from this government. Provide answers to us across the floor, and then we look and find out later that they are not true or that they are misrepresented.

Could you please explain to me, and explain to Islanders, where that home reno money is?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The money is in the hands of the homeowners or in the hands of the contractors for the work that was contracted.

The FOIPP request was up until August. As of August that's how much money had been paid out. Since August there has been much more money spent out, and I provided the information and I tabled those answers. That is the money that has been spent out. The FOIPP request was as of August.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Islanders have been told – some of them have been denied already – that the money is gone. You told us \$49,000 was spent and 97 projects are pending. You've already told Islanders that the money is spent. Forty-nine thousand plus 97 pending at \$6,000 per does not equal \$1.25 million.

Minister, where is that money?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Again, the information was broken down and it was tabled and it was provided. I don't have the exact figures here, but when the FOIPP request went in – it's not hard to count. As of August, yes, \$40,000 had been spent. But we have many more months that are under our belt, and we have projects that are still pending that we're working with contractors and we're working with homeowners to get finished. It hasn't been paid out, but it has been approved and it has been spent.

We are committed to these home renovation programs. We are committed to keeping Islanders in their home if they are able and they want to.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Carbon tax and increased home reno funding

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Let's just change gears here a little bit. We were talking about a carbon tax. Improving home energy is important in the way we fight climate change. The Premier's new carbon tax will take more money out of the pockets of the most vulnerable Islanders, and there is no way to argue that point.

Question: When can Islanders expect to see funding increased in home renovation programs to help low-income families deal with climate change and your new carbon tax?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

If I can recall, it was this government that increased the programs for low-income Islanders. We're the ones that have committed and completed six of our 11 platform commitments that are targeted towards low- to moderate-income Islanders. We have increased each and every one of our home repair programs by a total of \$400,000 in less than two years.

I have the confidence of every member on this side of the Legislature that when the carbon tax is there, there will be programs there that will help low-income Islanders, and it will put more money back in their pockets.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

McInnes Cooper lawyer re: health care contract negotiations

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

A question to the health minister: Minister, is it true that you have hired a Halifax-based McInnes Cooper lawyer to negotiate new contracts with health care providers on PEI, including doctors, nursing homes, and pharmacists?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Trivers: Sending that money out of province.

Mr. Henderson: Madam Speaker, yes, McInnes Cooper is retained by our department to do negotiations on our department's behalf.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

I wonder if the minister could inform this House how much he has budgeted for the legal fees for this high-paid lawyer from Halifax who's with McInnes Cooper.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Once again, McInnes Cooper are retained by our department to do the negotiations on a number of different files, and they would select the lawyer that would represent us.

I do not have the exact fees that would be paid. I can see what I can do to find that out, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

Once again we see McInnes Cooper being contracted by this government, just like we did in the egaming fiasco. Yet this minister has no idea how much he's budgeted to pay this high-priced lawyer to travel over from Halifax to negotiate with our doctors, with our nursing homes, and with our pharmacists.

Again, question to the minister of health: Is there no one here on Prince Edward Island qualified to do this negotiation?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Madam Speaker, one of the issues it is when we do retain a lawyer to provide representation to our department, we want to make sure – I mean, everybody knows everybody on Prince Edward Island, so sometimes it's important to get somebody that has no connections to anybody on Prince Edward Island, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Master Agreement negotiation

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

The negotiations alone for the Master Agreement with doctors has now dragged on for a long 18 months and counting, nowhere close to being completed.

Again, question to the minister: Why is this taking so long, and how much has the province spent to date in legal fees on this project alone?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Madam Speaker, as the Minister of Health and Wellness, and I'm sure the member of the opposition is well aware, it would be imprudent for me to be negotiating on the floor of the Legislature for these three different organizations that provide tremendous services to this province in health care delivery.

Once again, I'm of the understanding that the retaining fees are RFPed, so it would be in the best interest of Islanders to get the best possible value.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

These are essential health care services. Many are raising questions about this government's outsourcing negotiations to an off-Island law firm. Once again, McInnes Cooper.

Pharmacy services spending

I've heard concerns that the government is looking to cut upwards of 18% from what it spends on pharmacy services alone.

Question to the minister: How much have you been directed to reduce spending on pharmacy services?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Madam Speaker, yes, we do have a pharmacy service arrangement with the pharmacy association of Prince Edward Island.

I think it's incumbent upon me as minister to make sure that we are getting the best value when it comes to the cost of pharmaceuticals and the dispensing fees in this province. I can assure this House that McInnes Cooper will be representing our department and representing all Islanders to make sure we get the best value possible for Islanders.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Pharmacy group meeting with HW minister

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

The pharmacy owners' group has been seeking a meeting with this minister. They claim they can save taxpayers' money while improving access to health care here in PEI, which is vitally important, because Islanders right now are not receiving proper health care in many areas.

Again, question to the minister: Why have you refused to meet with the pharmacists on this very important issue?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Madam Speaker, the hon. member on the other side seems to believe that I should be negotiating every particular arrangement.

We went through this with the Canadian Blood Services arrangement. When we retain somebody to represent us we look forward to them getting the best possible value for Islanders. I'm sure the hon. member would be well aware that Islanders are paying the highest dispensing fees in the country and I think it's important that we get a reasonable deal for Islanders that's in the best interest of Islanders and taxpayers.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

I want to correct one thing that I had stated in my previous question when I said that this minister refuses to meet with any of the pharmacists' groups. I stand corrected. He actually met with the pharmacist owner in his own district. At that meeting, in that that meeting, this minister assured this pharmacy owner that the \$2.5 million or 18% would not be cut away from pharmacies, but then, and four days later, the pharmacy group received a letter from his deputy minister stating that, yes, indeed, this 18%, \$2.5 million, would be cut.

Again to the minister of health: Why will you not sit down with the pharmacists' group and meet with them to discuss options that they want to put forward?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Madam Speaker, as an individual who represents a riding, yes, the pharmacy individual in my riding did meet with me, and in that particular case I assured them that this is a negotiation.

I am not dictating a set number (Indistinct). I want people to be at the table discussing what's in the best interests of Islanders. I want to make sure that we get reasonable dispensing fees in this province. We have 48, 49 pharmacies that are providing services all across Prince Edward Island and we want a good deal for Islanders and taxpayers as well as pharmacies, and it's all about getting to the table and negotiating with the negotiators.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Democratic renewal committee mandate

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

The Special Committee on Democratic Renewal has worked hard on a number of fronts over the last year and a half, and I think all members of this House would agree that we've accomplished a lot.

The white paper gave the committee a mandate to look at a number of things beyond different electoral systems such as gender balance, the role of MLAs, the legislative calendar, and the civility of debate in this House. Of course, I'm disappointed with the government's response to the plebiscite results, but I hope that we can still see progress in the other important areas of democracy which this committee was mandated with.

A question to the Premier: Will the special committee be allowed to complete the rest of its mandate?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, the scope that was laid out in the white paper was laid out with the full intention that this would be the business of this House in the course of this mandate, and indeed, a number of the matters referred to by the Leader of the Third Party have been referred to in throne speeches, so it may well be, and it'll be for this House to give further guidance to the special committee, in the event that those matters are to be pursued by the special committee, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Premier and democratic renewal committee mandate

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

Yesterday, along with the other party leaders on Prince Edward Island, I received a letter from the Premier outlining his plan for election finance reform.

Election finance reform was part of the mandate of the Special Committee on Democratic Renewal so I was sort of surprised when the work we had started in this area was so suddenly and completely overridden by the Premier's letter.

Question to the Premier: Why have you superseded the mandate you, yourself, gave to the special committee on electoral reform?

Mr. Myers: Because you wouldn't tell them what he wanted to hear.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, I didn't supersede the committee whatsoever.

I followed up on the ministerial statement that I made last spring and on a commitment that we made in the throne speech, and have laid out very clearly and openly and transparently proposals for consideration with the intention that those would be pursued precisely as is said in the latter part of the letter.

If this House is of the view that the special committee should take up that work, then they may well do so.

But I don't think because a special committee exists that that means that the Premier is prevented from bringing forward very important reforms that will make the kind of change that I believe the Leader of the Third Party and others have been calling for.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Premier and campaign spending limits

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

While I would hope that if the Premier is, indeed, going to supersede the work of this committee that he would at least follow the direction he gave himself in the white paper.

On election financing the white paper spoke of four areas in election financing that should be addressed: who would be able to make donations; how much those people or bodies could make in terms of donations; taxpayer subsidies to the parties; and caps on campaign spending. But that caps on campaign spending was left out of your letter.

Question to the Premier: You changed your mind on whether corporations and unions can make donations, you changed your mind on who was going to continue the work of

this body. Did you also change your mind on capping spending limits?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, as the Leader of the Third Party will know, we actually discussed this in my office on November 7th as part of the consultation process that I indicated last spring I would undertake.

I did, also, with the Leader of the Opposition, although I was disappointed on the extent to which that was followed up.

But that's the nature of a consultation. As I said to the Leader of the Third Party when we met, that campaign financing may indeed, but campaign spending may, indeed, be something that arises further downstream.

This is a letter and it's a comprehensive letter with comprehensive proposals that are well laid out, and I encourage all hon. members to take them up in the spirit in which they've been put forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Tourist point of origin and growth trends

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

My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Minister, by all accounts the 2016 tourism year was fairly successful on Prince Edward Island. Could the minister inform the House the point of origin, including growth trends, of most tourists to Prince Edward Island in 2016?

Mr. Myers: And would you like a Christmas card?

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

If I do get a Christmas card I hope I get it from other hon. members over there that

were signing Christmas cards the day before.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacDonald: Perhaps we could all send one to the media, Madam Speaker.

An Hon. Member: The media didn't mention that one.

Mr. MacDonald: I'd like to thank the hon. member for his question.

Obviously, tourism is a very important industry here on PEI. We had an estimated 1.5 million visitors. When you look at that and compare roughly 6000,000 in Newfoundland, and with our population base which has increased to 149,200 as of today, we're doing very well.

Most of the growth came from northeastern United States, and Quebec and Ontario were our strongest markets. In fact, at one point during the summer I believe Quebec was on a growth of 31% during one month, so it's extremely important.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Tourism in 2017

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

2016 should provide a good base for the upcoming 2017 tourism year.

Minister, what is the outlook for the 2017 tourism year, and what factors are likely to contribute to this outlook, and what role does the dollar play in it?

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The 150th anniversary, there's much marketing taking place at the national level which is going to derive tourism right across the country that we hope we'll draw on visitors to that.

The indication from early bookings, which is relatively somewhat unheard of in our industry till after Christmas or close to March, but there are bookings being placed right now with roofed accommodations, so that's a really good sign.

Our projection of growth based on a five-year strategy that we just completed was about 3.5%, and we hope to target that.

We'll continue working, and I think this is a big one for Prince Edward Island, is partnering with the remaining Atlantic Provinces. Because we can't afford to do this alone, on our own provinces, by ourselves, but with an investment of \$280,000 a year we get a \$20 million partnership with our other Atlantic Provinces.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, minister.

As we all know PEI's tourism marketing dollars must be spent prudently to maximize their impact.

Minister: Where are the tourism marketing efforts and dollars being targeted for the 2017 tourism year?

Mr. Myers: Charlottetown. Same place (Indistinct).

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

When we market tourism as a whole, we market Prince Edward Island. We don't signify one area over another. We have great product and a great industry from one end of the Island to the other.

We will continue to focus on Atlantic Canada and northeastern United States. It's within driving distance and it's a sure market. Relative effects outside sources or outside effects don't necessarily hurt it.

As far as the dollar value, there's 13 other places in Canada the US population can go, but we continue to grow our tourism product. I don't use that as a relevant excuse when the dollar goes up and down because they have potential to go elsewhere, but they're coming here.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Wind energy resource increase

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy. The new electricity cables will allow for the transmission of an additional 360 megawatts of electricity. This will allow for more opportunities for exploring wind energy from the Island.

Minister, does your department plan to increase its wind energy resources?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. member, we are very pleased that we do have the two new cables that are being installed. We'll add that 360 to the present 200. We already are, on many days, over that 200. This will mean a more secure and reliable connection as well as prevent us, Maritime Electric, from having to use backup energy here.

We are very excited about the new cables. On PEI we're second to Denmark in the world. We will, in fact, as a result of our energy strategy, one of the recommendations was to increase wind capacity. In 2019 it's been suggested we do 30 megawatts and by 2025 that we have an additional 40. We will be exploring that opportunity.

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

Exporting energy from wind farms

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Wind energy produced for our own use or for export does provide great benefits for Island landowners, and also to businesses and into the Island as a whole. I have a group in my area who are ready to go with a wind farm.

Minister: Do the new cables provide opportunities for private wind developers to export electricity, and will you commit to working with these Islanders who are interested in developing wind farms?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

With the new cable it will provide a lot of economic opportunity for Prince Edward Island to export onto the grid, hon. member.

We have had great discussions with a lot of individuals interested. In particular, this increases capacity in rural PEI. We will continue to work with them. One of the things is that if they are able to secure an agreement for their energy on the grid, then we will certainly work with them.

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

Deleted government email accounts (further)

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Minister, can you tell the House whose emails were deleted?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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

Ms. Biggar: That's a great question, hon. member.

Ms. Biggar: That'd be a great question for you to ask the Auditor General.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I feel like my questions are done now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crowbush egaming social cost

Mr. Myers: Last week I asked questions about the government and their opening Crowbush a day early and that whole junket where a bunch of government officials spent the day talking amongst themselves about egaming.

Question to the unreliable Premier: What was the cost to taxpayers for the open day at Crowbush and this private egaming junket?

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

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

I've listened to a lot of the questions over the last few weeks concerning the egaming. As you know, the Executive Council issued an order on March 10th, 2015 for the Auditor General to review this whole file. Most audits would have been just done on the government records of it, but most of – the Executive Council went further and said: You can investigate other companies outside of the government.

There has been an extensive audit done on this, Madam Speaker, and I think those questions should be directed to the Auditor General.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I guess it's nothing new to this minister of covering up a scandal. He was the one with his signature at the bottom of a whole bunch of PNPs on the very last day of the file.

Egaming social meal cost

Question again to the Premier: What was the cost to taxpayers for the \$8,000 surf-and-turf gala dinner held at Sims in Charlottetown after the private egaming junket at Crowbush?

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

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

He answered his own question, \$8,000.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Minister of Finance wouldn't confirm that you guys actually paid for it, so thank you for coming clean on that. It's good to know that we're able to get some answers.

Destruction order re: emails (further)

Earlier in the session I had asked the Premier if he would provide to us the destruction order, and he told this House that he would go look into it and he would come back. It's three weeks ago.

Question to the Premier: Could you table that destruction order to this House, please?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, I said I would go back, and in fact that work is being done.

But let me explain that a destruction order is like a deleted email. The language makes it sound like something wrong is being done. What is called a destruction order by the archivists is a request for documents that are not classified as public records to be destroyed. That's why it's called a destruction order. This goes back – and I said I would go back to 2007 and bring that information to the House, and I will do that, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We've been waiting three weeks for this. I don't know what would take so long. If there was a destruction order you'd think it

would be stored somewhere because that committee had to meet to present it.

Can you tell this House: What's taking you so long to get to the bottom of the destruction order of the deleted emails?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Responding to all the other questions that were being asked in the House.

That request for that information has been put there and it will come forward as the decisions that were made by the committee that is conducted or led by the archivist under the public *Archives and Records Act*, and I'm happy to provide that information.

What it will produce, though, is a record of documents that have been destroyed because they're not required to be kept as government records.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm not sure why it's taking the Premier so long to come up with it. I'm not sure why it's taking the Premier so long to tell this House whose emails were deleted, as laid out by the Auditor General. I'm not sure why this Premier is hiding so much.

This Premier told Islanders that he was going to lead by example. Two years into his rule we're seeing what that actually really means.

Legal action against *Globe and Mail*

In Question Period yesterday you took exception to the *Globe and Mail's* exposé into your government's gaming scandal.

Question to the Premier: Did you ever take legal action against the *Globe and Mail* for misrepresenting the facts in the exposé?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: No, I did not, Madam Speaker, I've got better things to do.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

You said to this House that what Robyn Doolittle wrote was, in fact, not true. On Twitter yesterday she said it was true.

Can you tell the House: Which is the facts? What she says or what you told this House yesterday?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Speaker, my comment yesterday had to do with the headline, which took up, I think, a whole page as I recall, it's a while ago now, 001.

My point was – and I'll be speaking later today about the mighty Island – every opportunity I have for people to understand that our Island and our province can do well, and in fact do better than the rest of the country, I'll take it, and that's why I –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Premier MacLauchlan: That's why I made the point, and (Indistinct) that's why I made that point.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Zero, zero, one, indeed, right there, 001.

What the Premier really meant yesterday is he didn't like the media report. Not that it wasn't true, it's that he didn't like the headline.

Billing of government (further)

The Premier also doesn't like talking about emails because he doesn't want Islanders to know what was in them. He wants people to believe that it was all Wes Sheridan's fault,

but the roots of this scandal go much deeper than Wes Sheridan.

Question to the Premier: Why would the former deputy minister of innovation be directing staff in another department to funnel gaming payments through a third party for no work?

Speaker: Who was your question directed to?

Mr. Myers: The Premier.

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

Mr. LaVie: They all want up.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Of course we all want up. We want everybody at home and everybody in the gallery, and you, to – I want to reinforce what we're doing in economic development, and we're leading by example. We've put every possible identifier in, based on the Auditor General's report, to succumb to any transparency and accountability.

Our government is moving forward. I know the opposition doesn't like to see that, and it's hard at times to realize the fact, with the progress that we're making, whether it be our exports, whether I just mentioned immigration, whether it be economic development in their own ridings. The investment that we're making is unbelievable and we're excited about it, and we're excited for next year, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's, I guess, shameful to see the minister of tourism play political games with this when I'm asking, basically, questions of: Was there fraud in government? That's basically what I'm saying: Was there fraud in government?

I have emails from the CEO of Simplex to a senior government official that says what \$50,000 worth of work could buy. I have emails from a senior government official arranging the payments to be paid through a third party in order to hide the work.

Question to the Premier: Why do you persist on implying that the egaming scandal was the work of one rogue minister?

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

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

These are good questions. The Auditor General has total authority when it comes to investigation. The *Audit Act* says: the auditor shall have free access to all the files, documents, records related to financial matters –

An Hon. Member: But she didn't

Mr. R. Brown: – of every agency's government or Crown control.

I have respect for the Auditor General. I've known a number of auditor generals over my term, and they've all done extremely well and good jobs.

Under the *Audit Act*, the Auditor General has public inquiry access. That means she has access to anything she wants in government. If she sees anything wrong, she has the authority to contact the RCMP or other facilities.

She's the one that could've contacted them, she hasn't, so she hasn't seen anything wrong in terms of this.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Obviously, to me at least, it was more than just Wes Sheridan involved. The Premier tries to put Wes Sheridan under the bus for this whole session, but obviously there was a whole nest of Liberal insiders involved, there were senior government officials involved, and it extended right to the Premier's office.

Deleted government email accounts (further)

Question to the Premier: For myself and for the Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, will you tell us, once and for all, whose emails were deleted?

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

Mr. R. Brown: Madam Speaker, let's set some context here about the egaming situation.

In 2002 the previous Conservative government tried this e-scheme, you can call it, okay, with Earth Future Lottery.

Mr. LaVie: You forget your PNP?

Mr. R. Brown: At that time they were given a legal opinion that said government cannot do this.

The First Nations people on Prince Edward Island who tried to get them – improve their stake in life came up with an idea, approached government to say: Look, could you help us out in seeing if we could do this? If we can have some economic development in Prince Edward Island, if we can have some part of Prince Edward Island success.

The First Nations on Prince Edward – the first people that came here to Prince Edward Island came to approach government with a request to see if they could be included in the economic development of Prince Edward Island. You know, it was tried, it didn't work, but we'll try again, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

[End of Question Period]