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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

FRIDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2017



Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

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

**Capital Budget funding for schools**

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

As we are all aware the Capital Budget will be tabled later today. It will lay out government spending plans for the next year.

My first question is to the Premier: How many schools in District 11 will be receiving major funding announcements later today?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, indeed, we will hear the Capital Budget shortly, very soon. When we've had that presented and when it's tabled in the House we'll all be in a much better position to consider it together what's being put before the House and what provision is being made.

I'm proud to say that this is a very significant level of investment throughout our province and in areas of priority need. I'm quite sure that the people of Prince Edward Island will benefit from what we're about to hear in the Capital Budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

The candidate in the District 11 who is seeking the seat for the Liberal Party has been running radio ads promising a new Sherwood school, so most people would be certainly shocked if that's not in there today.

Question to the Premier –

**An Hon. Member:** Who (Indistinct)

**Leader of the Opposition:** – will Prince Street, Parkdale and Birchwood, also, be receiving timely spending announcements today?

**Mr. Trivers:** Good question.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct) after Question Period.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that we'll all be pleased to hear what government is putting forward in the way of a Capital Budget.

I'm prepared to say to the House that it will be a significant amount of investment in this fiscal year and an optimistic outlook looking forward.

That is a reflection of the ability that we have had with the cooperation of a very robust economy to manage the affairs of this province, to have a balanced operating budget and a very big Capital Budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

We know this Premier is fond of making executive decisions. We saw it with last year's plebiscite, and we've seen it in the flurry of spending announcements since you called the by-election.

Again, question to the Premier: If the Hillsborough Hospital were in District 11, would be seeing a major announcement for that facility today?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I hope we're all aware that our mental health facilities in this province serve the entire province. That we, as a government, have made a very dedicated and considered effort to treat that as a top priority and, indeed, are providing services through new teams, new collaborative teams, working together with community partners, as it's a much bigger thing than bricks and mortar and the opportunity to have a 21<sup>st</sup> Century whole of province medical facility to treat mental health conditions and ensure the health of Islanders is a great opportunity for all Prince Edward Islanders, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I've been hearing from many teachers who feel like the new education minister has picked right up from where the other one left off: Lots of photo ops and the strings being still pulled by the Premier. One even said to me that they believe he's a mile wide and an inch deep. Let's find out.

### **Psychological assessments for Island students**

We have 435 Island students that are waiting for a psychological assessment. A question to the minister: How has this government gotten into such a plight with our young learners?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Trivers:** No plan.

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

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

This was one of the first issues that landed on my desk as minister, and actually came up at a committee meeting a few days before I became minister and something that is obviously important in this system. It's an issue that faces provinces all across the country, and it's an issue that there is not going to be a quick solution to.

That said, I'm happy to say that since I have taken over this role, we have managed to line up a number of private psychologists to do at least one position's worth of assessments this year, which is ground that we've made up over where we were before. I've met with University of Prince Edward Island, and they're starting a doctoral program hopefully this fall. We've had discussions with the Mount in Nova Scotia, and they have changes coming too, Mr. Speaker –

**Speaker:** That's good, thank you.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – and there's more to come.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm going to ask you a bunch of questions; you don't need the whole Question Period for one answer.

When did you first come up with this idea of training teachers in psychology?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. R. Brown:** He always had it.

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

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

I'm not going to take credit for that idea. I'll say in a very forthright way that when I became minister I had four or five teachers reach out to me and indicate that they'd be interested in taking the training in psychology.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

### **Levels of assessment for children**

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

Minister, are you familiar with the three levels of assessments that can be used to assess our children?

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

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

I do have some familiarity with the various levels of assessments that can be used to assess children in need, and some familiarity with the list of assessments that are required as well, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

### **Teacher qualifications to assess children**

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

There are three levels of assessments. There's a level A, there's a level B, and a level C. The level C is the highest level of assessment that exists, which requires graduate level education and coursework.

Question to the minister: What level of assessments are our trained teaching staff currently allowed to conduct here on Prince Edward Island?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, that would depend on the level of training that the teaching staff have.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

So that's 100% not true, because I know several teachers that have a level C training, and they're not allowed to do the level C

assessments here on Prince Edward Island. No teacher on Prince Edward Island is currently allowed to do level C training, even though several of them have it.

The truth is many of the Island teachers are quite capable right now to do that.

Question to the minister: How many teachers in the system have a level C, that are qualified to assess children right now?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

The answer to that question is that we have met with the college that regulates psychologists on Prince Edward Island, and they have indicated that there's a certain test that needs to be taken to have the skill to do these assessments, and that only clinical psychologists on Prince Edward Island are able to do that. We have worked with Dr. Philip Smith to do our best to identify what we can do, and we've been assured that we're doing everything that we possibly can do within the envelope of resources that we have right now, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

The minister sounds a lot less confident than he did when I asked for the first question and he tried to answer for five minutes. It's because I caught him. He knows that I know more about it and he knows that he has not done his homework, even though it was the very first announcement that he made.

### **Number of teachers qualified to assess children**

Question again, because you didn't answer it: How many teachers in our system right now have a level C that can do these assessments today?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I did answer the question. I said that teachers are not able to do the assessments; that clinical psychologists are required to do the assessments, and that is coming directly from Dr. Philip Smith, who's the registrar of the college that deals with that.

We have certainly looked into that. We've met with Dr. Smith to discuss that. We've had lengthy discussions within both our department and outside of that with the college and the various schools that offer that. In fact we've gone further to have discussions at the university levels as to how we might be able to address that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

That simply is not true. Level C is the level that you need to provide assessments. We have several teachers in our system that have it.

The truth is that this minister is trying to hide, is that it's his government that is currently blocking them from doing them. It's his government that's allowing these teachers that have the proper qualifications to do the assessments.

### **Psychological assessments for Island students (further)**

Question to the minister: How long ago could government have addressed this three-year backlog of psychological assessments?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Action, we need action.

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

I would say that I would absolutely love it if we could reduce this list with great haste.

**Mr. Trivers:** Make it happen.

**Mr. J. Brown:** However, we have a great staff of teachers on Prince Edward Island. We have a great staff of professionals that support all of our students, and they have a huge workload to undertake, and that workload is very specific. It's very complex in the classroom these days.

And so, certainly we have taken the time, and I have met with Julia Gaudet, who has researched this thoroughly. We have met, as I say, with Philip Smith, and we are doing everything that we can, Mr. Speaker, and I assure you of that.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Myers:** All right, so thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So here, the other day, whenever the minister needed money to hire more teachers, the minister that's next to him there gave him some of the money from his PNP defaults so that he could hire teachers.

### **Private psychologists for schools**

I wonder now: Can you get money from him again, and will you commit today – because if you really want these, the backlog, taken care of like you say you do, will you commit today by the end of this school year to hire private psychologists so the list is zero at the end of the school year this year?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I would love nothing more than if I could haul out the money cannon and blow this problem away. Unfortunately, the reality is, we will have a tough time to spend the \$200,000 that we were able to reallocate to put towards private psychologists for the

balance of this year, and that's a simple reality of the fact that there aren't enough psychologists to do the work that we need to have done. There are 6-10 a year graduating. We're doing all we can to try and improve that; there's just not the bodies right now.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Myers:** A few weeks back, the very first action of this very minister was that he was going to allow teachers to do the assessment. So, what we've uncovered here today is that with a level C, that there are teachers already in the system who can do that.

### **Psychological assessments for Island students (further)**

There's several teachers spread across our system who can currently do it. Your government is blocking them. You won't let it happen, and I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, why three weeks ago when you mentioned this idea to the media, why did you not already, since then, start allowing some of these teachers who are qualified to do these assessments to start that work today so this big list of students waiting for help in this system, that they can get their help so that number can get down to zero quicker?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

What I would say in relation to this, and I think it makes perfect sense, is that if I could solve the problem as simply as the hon. member suggests, I would have done that.

**An Hon. Member:** Absolutely.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Teachers reached out to me —

**Mr. Fox:** He won't let you.

**Mr. J. Brown:** — some of them do have that training. We have spoken with the college and universities. We would hope that some of that training might translate into a quicker route through to the certification required and if that can work, Mr. Speaker, we'll be all the happier to work on different ways that we can encourage those teachers and enable them to take that training and that's what we've committed to do and I've been working on that right since day one and I'll continue to do that.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

### **Development of mental health cluster**

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

Mr. Speaker, earlier this week we discussed the urgent need to replace the Hillsborough Hospital with a modern mental health campus to better serve Islanders. As our leader has said, and as we proposed, what we need is a singular focus to raise the bar for mental health services across the board into a mental health cluster.

Question to the minister: Do you see the potential that the development of a mental health cluster could bring to Prince Edward Island?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

The reality is that we have already allocated \$250,000 for planning to develop a campus-style model of delivery of institutional and as well as transitional mental health services in this province and we very shortly will be announcing the winner of that contract and tender. We'll look forward to seeing what exactly a campus-style version of delivery would look like.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

We think a mental health cluster is a bold response to the mental health crisis touching families and communities all across the Island. A new mental health cluster should be based on four pillars: Service delivery, recruitment and retention, skills training and workforce development, and research and development.

Question to the health minister: Will the replacement for Hillsborough Hospital have the proper facilities to deal with the growing demand for forensic psychiatric service?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, it's great to have the hon. member opposite to talk about some of the concepts, but that's actually the way we are going to be forwarding our information through our contract that we'll be awarding shortly to look at how campus-style model looks at, but yes, that's the whole idea is that forensics – we have a lot of our services in forensics delivered at East Coast Forensics over in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia and we are looking at trying to repatriate that back here to the province as well as some of the other delivery of services when it comes to transitional housing and things of that nature – and the institutional component of mental health. We will be seeing what the outcomes of that contract will deliver, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

We hear all the time about the difficulties of recruiting and retaining mental health professionals. One reason is aging facilities, but siloed and disconnected services are another.

**Mental health campus and health care professionals (further)**

Question to the health minister: Will the new mental health campus be structured to allow internships and residencies for mental health professionals in a teaching hospital format?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

As when we made our presentation here under some of our concepts of moving forward in the delivery of mental health, we talked about those kinds of concepts, but it would be presumptuous for me as minister and/or the member opposite to outline what the outcome of our review will be.

So once again, we have \$250,000. It's going into planning. It's exactly the kind of considerations that I would have, but I guess I wouldn't consider myself professional enough to say that that's exactly what it should look like. That's why we're going to be hiring the experts and awarding that contract to an organization that will be able to review and research that information and then put those plans in place.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, you have to forgive me if I'm a little bit skeptical and a little bit impatient with this. We've been asking this for many, many years and now we're finally hearing that something might be coming. I don't think it's presumptuous. I think it's bold and I think it's smart that we should be doing this. Being able to deliver a wide range of mental health services involves more than just psychiatrists and psychologists. It includes nurses, therapists, RCWs and many others.

What work has been done to identify positions difficult to fill and what work has been done to develop training programs to fill those gaps?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!



**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Henderson:** Correct, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member is identifying that we do have collaborative approaches when we deliver mental health services in this province, that's why we have – whether it's psychiatrists, whether it's psychologists that the member from Georgetown-St. Peters talked about. They all play a role. It could be nurse practitioners and nurses, et cetera. It's very important that we try to make sure that we're collaborating all together – that, once again, we're getting the most appropriate care to the individual, in the most appropriate location, by the most appropriate health care deliverer, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

The lack of accurate and consistent data within the mental health system affects the ability to effectively plan and deliver mental health services now and in the future. One of the pillars of a mental health cluster should include a more comprehensive data collection that could be used to fuel research and development in the best practices in mental health that could be applied locally, nationally, and internationally.

#### **Development of mental health cluster (further)**

Question to the health minister: Can you think of a reason why a mental health cluster shouldn't have a research pillar and partnership with our post-secondary institutions?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Henderson:** You're very right, Mr. Speaker.

I wouldn't have a reason why it shouldn't, but, once again, I think that's the whole concept of awarding a contract that was put out by tender. We'll be awarding who that

successful bidder was in that delivery of a campus-style model and I like the concept of a research component of this. In fact, when the hon. member behind me in education and advanced learning has talked a little bit about the issue about working with UPEI – I too have met with UPEI to talk about psychology and how we can do a post-doctorate psychology program and training here at UPEI. We will continue to work with all the possible solutions that might be created and I look forward to seeing the outcome of the report, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

#### **Binding plebiscite during next election**

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

It's been over a year since Islanders voted in favour of proportional representation. Last year, the Premier presented the deeply-flawed plan for a plebiscite do-over, but since then there's been no action taken on that. In the throne speech, we heard the same plan that doesn't address one of the fundamental flaws.

A question to the Premier: Does he still plan on making the second plebiscite a binding one and if so, how?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the process that we went through last year that was worked and brought forward by a committee of – a multi-party committee of this House. It took us a certain point in terms of what Islanders have committed to, what we've got to consider as we move forward in terms of participation; in terms of the clarity of what this process will lead to; and in terms of the significance for our democratic system and Legislature and engagement in the future.

There will be a referendum – that is clear – that will be together with the next election and that will be something that we in this House will be able to perfect.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

We still have no idea whether this will indeed be a binding referendum.

The Premier argued that he has no obligation to implement proportional representation because the turnout in the plebiscite was too low – a decision that is quite unprecedented and indeed it sets a very dangerous precedent for our democratic institutions. By this logic, the federal by-elections in Alberta and Quebec that were recently held are invalid and Denis Coderre is still the mayor of Montreal.

A question to the Premier: If the turnout in the upcoming District 11 by-election is not to the Premier's liking, will he be putting Doug Currie back in office?

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh!

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Mr. Roach:** Oh my God.

**An Hon. Member:** Ludicrous.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, we are committed to two principles in reaching the go-forward position and what Islanders will choose as our electoral model: One is that it will be clear. They will have an opportunity to make a clear choice and that this will be presented in a way that will enhance and create the greatest possibility for participation.

But let me say, there's a big difference between a by-election that will elect someone to be here until the next general election and changing an electoral model that has been in place for 160 years. That's why we have to be clear and careful and considered and work together and give Islanders – all Islanders – an opportunity to have their say in this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

The Premier and some members opposite me may not appreciate the question, but it's merely the rational extension of the Premier's own flawed logic, where you go to the people, you ask a question, they come back through a democratic process with an answer and you ignore it.

**Mr. Roach:** (Indistinct) rightly. Forget that part?

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** You revert to what existed before.

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Indeed, your own candidate, Mr. Premier, in District 11 last night, when asked about why government did not honour the vote said: that the Premier made and I quote, 'an executive decision' –

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Mr. Speaker, that sounds less like the hallmarks of a fundamental democracy and more like the features of a dictatorship.

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

**Honouring vote of plebiscite**

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** A question to the Premier: When will he uphold fundamental democratic institutions –

**Mr. Roach:** My, my.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** – when will he respect the wishes of Islanders as they expressed it in the plebiscite last year? In short: When will he honour the vote?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I believe the logic of the Leader of the Third Party changed at about 8:00 p.m. on the night of the plebiscite. The non-binding

plebiscite that he produced as a participant in the joint committee, the select committee that was established for this purpose and everybody in this House, and we did it collectively, we did it unanimously, knew that the plebiscite was to be non-binding and that is how far we got with that process.

We will have a referendum that will determine this issue clearly, confidently with the full engagement and the voice of Prince Edward Island voters. That is what we're committed to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Roach:** Nothing like the facts.

**An Hon. Member:** You committed to too.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

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

### **Renovation project at Three Oaks Senior High**

My question is for the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: The renovation project at Three Oaks Senior High School is now entering the second school year. I drive by and see gaping holes in the side of the building by times.

Can the minister tell this House what measures are in place to ensure this renovation project does not impact student learning?

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

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

We're very proud of the project that is going on at Three Oaks that our government has committed to the reconstruction of that. It's a \$22 million project that is completely redeveloping that whole school and its space. We are progressing on that project very well.

We do take several measures to ensure that it does not impact the students' daily activities. There's daily meetings that take

place between the construction manager and the school principal and staff. If it's determined that there's going to be construction in a particular area of the day, that may impact students, then it is rescheduled to a time where it won't impact them.

Those activities, we're ensuring that if it's something that we have to do in a certain area, then it's planned at a different time when students aren't there.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, your first supplementary.

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

Minister: Is there an opportunity to do this work after school hours and on weekends to minimize any of the disruptions?

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

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

As I mentioned there are daily meetings and the construction managers are reviewing that schedule on a regular basis. In fact, that has already taken place. If it's been determined that something has to be done to keep on schedule then it is, in fact, and has been done, that work has taken place on the weekend, or it has taken place during times, like PD days and things like that that's not going to impact the students. We are very cognizant of that.

This is a the largest reconstruction of that type that has taken place within the school system since – and that school is over 30 years old, but it is a complex –

**Speaker:** Thank you, minister.

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, your second supplementary.

### **Construction on sports field and school track at Three Oaks**

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

Minister, in Summerside, adjacent to Three Oaks is a large sports field and the school track. I see large machinery on this site every day.

Can you tell this House when this work will be completed and when this track can be accessed by the students again?

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

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

The particular sports field at Three Oaks complex has not been operational in a number of years due to water infiltration into the field. What we have done as part of this project is tendered out for a new track and field and sports field.

That tender came in at about \$450,000; a public tender, the field has been raised up by two feet. That work is progressing very well. We're very happy to see that it's about 95% finished. What you see now is probably mostly going to be cosmetic around that site. It's going to be a great addition to the sports program at that facility and for all students.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

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

### **PEI tourism association and EI for workers**

My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism. PEI's three largest sectors are agriculture, fisheries and tourism. All of these sectors depend on seasonal workers. These workers need EI to carry them through the off-season.

My question to the minister is concerning the letter from the PEI tourism association and their concern, also, about workers having enough EI to carry them through the off-season so they can go back to their job.

Have you been in discussions with the PEI tourism association on this matter?

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

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

The answer is yes. We are concerned about this issue. We have labour shortages in every industry on Prince Edward Island. We have an expanding economy that is second-to-none in Canada and tourism is no different.

We'll continue to work alongside the tourism industry to create sustainability. It is hard to create sustainability when we have a labour shortage or a workforce issue, such as what the hon. member has spoke about.

We're working closely with the industry and Passport to Employment where the age of people of 55 and over have the opportunity to go back to work.

We created a shuttle service to the north side with the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning. We're trying to do as much as we can to create sustainability in a workforce in an industry that's growing that creates \$450 million in revenue into the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

The federal government is now reviewing the situation – the 2012 decision was made by the previous Conservative government –

**Mr. Myers:** They just promised that they were going to undo it though.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, this is a major concern –

**Mr. Myers:** Where's Sean Casey?

**Mr. R. Brown:** – the review process is going out. We have moved forward. We

have moved from a committee to a report to the government saying they're going to do a review process.

Can you get your department to find out what is involved in this review process –

**Mr. Myers:** Make the Liberals keep their promises.

**Mr. R. Brown:** – to members of Prince Edward Island's sectors –

**Mr. Myers:** Make the Liberals keep their promises.

**Mr. R. Brown:** – can find out how to interject and have their voices heard in this process –

**Mr. Myers:** Make Liberals keep their promises.

**Mr. R. Brown:** – minister.

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

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

Yes, my department will work alongside with our local MPs and try to get them to endorse this issue, and concern. It's a concern for many industries, but it is certainly a concern for the industry of tourism.

Many of the students that I've talked to that live in my own riding, which is considered rural PEI, are having a tough time to qualify for the new federal program.

With expanding businesses trying to create our shoulder season on Prince Edward Island and seeing the growth in our economy, it is a concern and it should be a concern for every industry and I think that we all have to come together. It's 7%, almost 7% of our GDP on Prince Edward Island.

That, without anything else, is –

**An Hon. Member:** Good job.

**Mr. MacDonald:** – an important issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

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

Islanders deeply value their homes and their land. They feel the powerful connection to it, especially since it's passed down to families' generations.

### **Use of Expropriation Act to seize private land**

Question to the transportation minister: How many times have you used the *Expropriation Act* to seize private land owned by Islanders since you become the transportation minister?

**Mr. Trivers:** Good question (Indistinct)

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

There's been a number of occasions during construction that we have had to take different pieces of land. Off the top of my head, I think it's three.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

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

What we have here is a minister that loves to go in and seize family land and take it away from their families and their generations that have followed.

**Mr. LaVie:** Shame.

**Mr. Fox:** Question to the minister: How many times was the *Expropriation Act* used to seize private land by owners since you became the minister?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

When we're doing a project with construction, we go through a whole process of negotiating first with landowners to come to an agreement. We use any means to come to that agreement, using taxpayers' dollars in a responsible way, and using independent appraisals of the value of that land. If we cannot come to an agreement, we do use the expropriation process.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

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

What we have here is a minister that loves to use strong-arm tactics just to simply go in and seize property.

Question to the transportation minister: How many times do you anticipate using the *Expropriation Act* to seize property going forward?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Trivers:** I know one.

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

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

Our department and my department and my staff have done a great job of working with landowner's right across this Island. Down in Mount Herbert we came to an agreement when we had to do the roundabout there, and we came to an agreement with landowners on what land we would need to use for that, and just as one example.

All across the Island, we're doing projects that require purchases of land, and going forward we can't anticipate how many pieces of land we're going to have to buy. We're doing a lot of work right across Prince Edward Island –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) taking it.

**Ms. Biggar:** – the largest infusion of infrastructure investment in the history of this province, and we'll continue to do that.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Let's get this straight. It's you, minister, that are using strong-arm tactics. Either you take the deal or we take the land from you. That's what you're doing.

**An Hon. Member:** Shame.

**Mr. Fox:** It's my understanding that a new roundabout is planned for Oyster Bed Bridge, and the *Expropriation Act* may be used to gather land in this project. And that is actually being threatened to landowners right now.

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

**Mr. LaVie:** Oh.

**Mr. Fox:** You are threatening landowners. They're going to take their land in Oyster Bed Bridge.

Question to the minister: Will you confirm this?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Trivers:** Good question.

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

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct).

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

My department works very well with landowners right across this province when we are doing projects –

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

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct) Cornwall bypass

**Ms. Biggar:** We negotiate in good faith with those landowners. We are continuing to do work –

**Mr. Trivers:** Until the courts get involved.

**Ms. Biggar:** – in planning, construction projects as part of our Capital Budget,

projects that are asked for by different communities, to improvements for safety –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) a rush to get here

**Ms. Biggar:** – and in that process we negotiate with landowners, and we have been having great success in doing that in all our projects across PEI.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

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

Let's be very clear here. You've ordered your staff to look at expropriating more land in Oyster Bed Bridge, and heaven only knows where else in the province.

#### **Ruling on Hughes-Jones Centre arbitration**

Question to the minister: Have you reviewed the judge's ruling on the Hughes-Jones Centre arbitration, or has somebody even explained it to you?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I would like to clarify that we have not been threatening people as people would have – we don't show up on pieces of property and tell people to stop work and threaten people –

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

**Ms. Biggar:** – that they have authority over a project –

**Mr. Myers:** You send Billy Dow instead.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** But I will tell you –

**Mr. Myers:** You can ask Billy Dow –

**Ms. Biggar:** – that our –

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

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) Billy Dow's (Indistinct) –

**Ms. Biggar:** Our staff work with landowners right across this province. They have over 30 years of experience working in the field, and we will continue to work in good faith –

**Mr. Myers:** I've seen Billy Dow's letters.

**Ms. Biggar:** – with Islanders.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Well, Mr. Speaker, let's tell you that a ruling found that this minister didn't fairly compensate, after seizing farmland for the Cornwall bypass, awarding the landowner an extra \$300,000 in compensation, plus legal fees.

**An Hon. Member:** Wow.

#### **Dollars spent defending expropriation of land**

**Mr. Fox:** Question to the transportation minister: How much did your government and your department spend on legal fees defending this expropriation?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**An Hon. Member:** Oh, that's a good question right there.

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

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

Anytime that we have to negotiate land deals, there's always a legal part of it in registering deeds and negotiating with landowners. If we don't agree on what prices are reached at, landowners have a mechanism there, as all do, to appeal that. We went through an appeal with a piece of property. The judge decided to split the difference on what we had offered and what the owner and the tenant of that particular property wanted, and we respected the

judge's decision and it applies specifically to that piece of property.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, your final question.

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

Well, this minister has a proven record in the last couple of years of seizing land that she wants for her own use, taking it away from families and members across the Island. Minister, you're using an outdated law to seize more private property that doesn't fairly compensate landowners. The judge said: You need to fix the law. Instead you're using it to seize property from Island families, ignoring a judge's ruling.

**Mr. LaVie:** Oh, shame.

#### **Tabling of updates to Expropriation Act**

**Mr. Fox:** Question to the transportation minister: Will updates to the *Expropriation Act* be tabled this session?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

We are very well aware that the *Expropriation Act* is in need of review. We are looking at that right now, but when the member across the floor talks about ignoring process, ignoring rules, I would put it to him that he better review his own behaviour by going onto a piece of property under construction and claiming to have authority to shut it down.

Thank you.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]