



Session:	3/65
Date:	21 November 2017
No:	4

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

TUESDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2017



Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

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

**Legislation for lower class sizes**

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

In the last six months, we've seen government twice have to play catch up on the continuing issue of increasing out of control class sizes, both here in Charlottetown and across the bridge in my home community of Stratford.

My first question is to the Premier: Premier, will you commit to legislating and enforcing lower class sizes to create a better learning environment for our children?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, there are various ways to deal with the growing population, which is – we're happy to say – is the case in Prince Edward Island, a direct reflection of the priority that our government has placed on our population action plan to recognize that we now have a population of 152,000 people, largest ever as of the end of June. That our population in that 12-month period got younger. So we are taking this to heart and we're willing to look at all the measured, but we're investing today in the priorities for teachers and learners in this province.

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.

I represent a district that has been growing exponentially over of the last number of years. In fact, Stratford has been known to be the fastest growing community in all of

Atlantic Canada for several years now. It's only common sense to realize that as the population of a community grows the demands on the education system and other resources increase, as well.

Yet, what we're seeing is stop-gap measures that aren't working because this government just has to keep making the same announcements every few months.

Again, question to the Premier: Wouldn't a long-term solution to class sizes bring more stability to our schools than Band-Aid solutions every polling period?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, in our Capital Budget, presented on Friday, there was an announcement of a plan to invest significantly in the two schools in Stratford with the addition of 14 classrooms. I would not call that, by any means, a Band-Aid solution. Indeed, we understood from across the floor that the opposition was concerned that we were spending too much.

This comes out of a plan, through a planning process on the advice of the Public Schools Branch and we're proud to stand behind that, as we are, in the investments, major investments in water and waste water for Stratford and for the greater area here that's providing the basis for public health and future growth, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

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

We already know that 14 new classrooms added to Stratford is not going to be enough, especially when we have continued growth at the significant level that we do.

After the upheaval over the past year thanks to this government, our schools could surely use some stability. During the school closure fight last winter parents were clear that large

class sizes are making it harder for our students to succeed. We need to decrease class size and better address the composition in our classrooms to allow our educators to do what they do best and that is to teach.

### **Reduction of class sizes and closure of schools**

Again, to the Premier: Premier, wouldn't your time have been better spent over the last year finding a way to reduce class size instead of trying to close schools?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the school review process was necessary and, indeed it was – had been not carried out for more than two decades and it gave –

**Mr. Myers:** 2008.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – Islanders an opportunity to take a stock of the situation across the province. Indeed, that has led to new investments. I find it ironic that today the call is for more capital expenditure when, on Friday, the protest was that we were spending too much. We did address the situation in Stratford on the advice of the Public Schools Branch.

Indeed, earlier last week, we made investments in an additional 41 teachers and education assistants, some of which are going to Stratford.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

We've seen the results of this upheaval from the Premier's micromanaging of this file; a botched attempt to fire teachers, low test scores in key areas, a three to five-year wait for students' psychological assessments, a failed attempt to close schools, five education ministers in just over two years, and now a by-election in District 11.

Question to the Premier: When will you recognize that you're micromanaging is only making this issue worse?

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

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

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

It's my pleasure to get up and address the House in response to this question. With the addition of 41 new frontline teaching positions on Prince Edward Island just last week, I think we're in a great position to move forward. We saw that we were proactively addressing the issue of classroom composition with an allocation of 10 teachers, seven of which will be put in the classroom right away, and room for three more to move along, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Leader of the Opposition:** (Indistinct) classrooms.

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

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

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

### **MOU and leaked emails**

The finance minister has repeatedly told this House, as well as the Auditor General and maybe even the RCMP that he had no knowledge of the exclusive MOU his own department executed. Last spring's leaked emails proved otherwise.

Question to the minister: Why do you continue to refuse to own up to your knowledge of this exclusive MOU?

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

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

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

I have answered these questions before at previous sitting of this Legislature. There is no question that one of the things that the

Auditor General has done is she has reviewed each and every email that was involved in this.

Certainly, the Premier was the one who said: you know we're going to get the Auditor General to have a look at this file.

I wouldn't call myself being mentioned in one email by someone else is – would assert that I had been involved in this file. I never had sent an email and never received an email with respect to that file.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Before I'm done, he will eat those words. This exclusive MOU was in place from July to October and it stated: PEI, nor any of its employees, officers, contractors, agents, representatives and/or professional advisors agrees not to discuss with any entity its interest and/or capacity in hosting or creating a financial service centre in the province.

Minister: Do you want to stick with your story that you knew nothing about this MOU and its exclusivity clause?

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

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

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

When we're talking about this e-gaming file the dates are important. This file was closed in February of 2012. When I received an email in July of 2012, it was with respect to an MOU that was signed from another staff member. It's simply a mention a financial platform; it didn't mention anything further than that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

**Copy of document from NewCo company**

I have here today, and I'll table it for all the House, an email from this minister's very account, it was dated September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012. It was from Keith Laslop and it says: please find attached letter with our proposal to the Government of Prince Edward Island.

It was to you, minister: Why have you never mentioned this before, that you were sent a direct copy of a document from this NewCo scheme company?

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

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

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

In my role, at that point in time as Minister of Finance, I did get a lot of requests from many different companies. But, as I said with respect to a company wanting to come in and set-up a financial services, in September of 2012, when this file was closed in February of 2012, I just don't see the connection, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you.

In September – in 2012, they had – there was an exclusivity clause and it ran until the end of September that year. Your dates are mixed up because you're definitely wrong.

In fact, you knew enough that you told Wes Sheridan about this exclusivity clause.

To the finance minister: What dates exactly were you brought in on this NewCo insider scheme that Chris LeClair cooked up?

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

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

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

I'm not sure exactly what the member is talking about when he's talking about a scheme, what his inference is to a company called NewCo.

I know that we did enter into an exclusivity clause and until such time as that clause, or that timeframe has elapsed, staff are not to discuss with any other company with respect to that.

I simply reminded the former minister of finance of that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

The email that I will tabled later today has brand new information that shows that you received information from Keith Laslop, it was his presentation to government of a financial services platform that was identical to the one that was inside the exclusivity contract and was brought here by Chris LeClair, and you were part of it. Wes Sheridan was a part of it. It was a big scheme. That's why I call it a scheme.

#### **Meetings with NewCo and Wes Sheridan**

Could you tell the House how many conversations and meetings with this NewCo insider did you have with Wes Sheridan?

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

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

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

That would be zero. None.

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

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

#### **Meetings with Mr. Laslop re: NewCo**

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

Question to the finance minister: Did you ever personally meet or have conversations with Mr. Laslop on the NewCo insider scheme?

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

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

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

I had no meetings with any individuals with respect to the financial platform, or whatever, that the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters is referring to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

#### **Meeting with Chris LeClair re: NewCo**

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

I'll tell you why these questions are important: because over time, this minister has come to his feet and told us – first, he didn't know anything; then he knew a little bit; then he knew a lot; and then he knew a lot more, right down to the point where he's talking to Wes Sheridan about it – right down to the point where, in this very Question Period, he told me one thing that I'm able to prove otherwise. That's why it's important. When he gets to his feet, I'm not sure that the answers are believable.

Question to the minister: Did you ever personally meet or have conversations with Chris LeClair about this NewCo insider scheme?

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

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

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

Certainly, with respect to the preamble that the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters had before he asked the question, there was at no time was I involved with this file. With respect to my knowledge of the file, after the Auditor General finished conducting her

review, I became very knowledgeable about the file at that point because I had –

**Mr. LaVie:** Your nose is growing.

**Mr. Fox:** (Indistinct).

**Mr. Roach:** – the opportunity to read the Auditor General’s report and I was tasked to work with various departments in response to the Auditor General’s recommendations and that’s where I got my knowledge of this file.

Thank you.

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

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

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

#### **Financial platform and MOU meeting**

Last spring, the finance minister told this House: I had no idea what that meeting was about, other than that there was a meeting to talk about a financial platform and that there was an MOU in place and that was the end of it.

Minister: Just what meeting about a financial platform were you referencing?

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

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

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

At that time that would have been a staff member who advised me that there was a group that were going to have discussions about a financial platform and that there was an MOU in place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Myers:** That’s it right there.

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

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

That is, in fact, what happened. I have more emails that have come to light about this insider scheme that was going on.

On August 29<sup>th</sup>, Wes Sheridan had a lunch meeting with Chris LeClair and Keith Laslop from NewCo.

Minister: Would you agree that this meeting broke the exclusivity contract of your MOU?

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

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

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

I don’t have the dates or the MOU with me here today, but I’ll gladly go and have a look at that and try to confirm the dates of that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

So it very much broke the exclusivity contract of the MOU – very much.

#### **Exclusivity clause and MOU**

On August 30<sup>th</sup> the former premier’s chief of staff, Allan Campbell met with Chris LeClair and Keith Laslop about NewCo.

Question to the minister: Would you agree that this meeting broke the exclusivity clause of your MOU?

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

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

As I stated in the previous question, I don’t have the MOU in front of me that would have the various dates on it and I certainly wasn’t aware of that meeting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

So, more emails again I have – and I have a lot of them that I’m going to table for everyone to see here today.

On August 30<sup>th</sup>, the CEO of Innovation PEI, Cheryl Paynter and staffer Brad Mix met with Chris LeClair and Keith Laslop about NewCo.

Question to the minister: Would you agree that this meeting broke the exclusivity clause of your MOU?

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

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

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

I think I’d like to remind the House that this matter was turned over to the Auditor General. The Auditor General and her staff took a thorough amount of time; they reviewed some – in excess of 10,000 documents. I couldn’t tell you the large number of people that they interviewed and the Auditor General came back with her report. She made 15 recommendations, which were all followed-up by the various government departments. I still support the Auditor General and the great work that she had done and brought back to this Legislature on that file.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

In the same email, Chris LeClair asked the CEO of Innovation PEI for a chance for Keith Laslop to get an overview of the initiative: meaning, of course, e-gaming and financial services.

Question to the minister: Would you agree that this also broke your exclusivity clause in the MOU?

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

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

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

Again, I have the utmost respect and faith in the Auditor General and her department. The Auditor General had the opportunity to review all emails with respect to this file. The Auditor General came back to this Legislature and made 15 recommendations. All the recommendations have been followed-up upon and I, again, continue to support the work that was done by the Auditor General and the recommendations that were made from that department.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Of course, we all know that the Auditor General said clearly in her report that one of the limiting factors was that she didn’t have access to all the information because you guys hid it from her. So the fact that you hid it from her makes it easier for you to stand behind a report because you hid information from her, quite frankly, and we’re getting to the bottom of it.

**Meeting with Chris LeClair re: NewCo (further)**

I’m going to ask you a question again. I’m going to go back to one that I already asked: Did you ever have a meeting or conversation with Chris LeClair about this NewCo insider scheme, Minister?

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

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

**Mr. Roach:** Again, Mr. Speaker, on this particular file, there was a tremendous amount of work done by the Auditor General with respect to emails. The Auditor General had the opportunity to interview many of those that were involved in the file and the Auditor General has come back with her report and it’s one thing, I believe, that

when we have processes in place, we have to support those processes and the work done by the departments that bring it back. I support the information that the Auditor General has brought back for this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Actually, this Premier and this Cabinet deliberately tied the Auditor General's hands and she never looked into any part of the insider scheme about NewCo.

### **Audit and NewCo**

Question to the Premier: Why did you take this decision to avoid an audit on the NewCo insider scheme?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General was given a wide mandate. This was a mandate that she was asked to take up in early March – the ninth day after we formed a government. We said clearly that this meant that we were doing business differently.

I want to note that in her 2017 report – her annual report – the Auditor General said: All recommendations have been accepted by government and that in addition, government responded to the Deputy Minister of Finance and secretary of Treasury Board – communicated to all deputy ministers, the Treasury Board, and the comptrollers office are committed to monitoring compliance with legislation, policies, and procedures.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

And that is, of course, because the Premier and his government hid information from her – wouldn't let her look into all of it, gave her a very confining space with it to work in. You planned all this. You're directly responsible for it. You're the guy that was on t.v. boasting how: it didn't matter who was involved, they were going under the bus. Boy, that certainly changed, didn't it?

The only office in this province with the legislative mandate to determine criminal action and lay charges is the Crown Attorney's office. The Auditor General states: The purpose of the MOU was to allow TBT to negotiate exclusively with Innovation PEI on a financial services platform for the province.

### **Exclusivity clause and MOU (further)**

A question to the Premier: Do you think multiple senior staff, including the Premier's Chief of Staff, taking a meeting with Chris LeClair and Keith Laslop on the NewCo insider scheme breaks that exclusivity clause?

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

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

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

This matter has been thoroughly reviewed by the independent body of the Auditor General. I note in the Auditor General's remarks that she had brought in outside counsel to review whether or not any laws had been broken, and she advised that no laws had been broken.

The Auditor General's report and her mandate was far more than just that of being financial, and I certainly respect the Auditor General and the fact that she would go and get support from a lawyer to determine whether or not anything of a criminal nature occurred, and she said it did not.

**Mr. Myers:** Not the job of a lawyer (Indistinct) start.

**Mr. Roach:** So, I certainly support the work that the Auditor General does, and I certainly appreciate the fact that she brought in legal counsel to advise her beyond that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Myers:** You (Indistinct) how the law works.

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

**Mr. Myers:** You know that's not how the law works.

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

### **MLA severance packages**

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

With the recent resignation of the former Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, the issue of overly generous MLA severance packages has once again been raised.

Could government please inform this House and table what the current liability for earned, but not yet paid out, severance packages is?

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

**An Hon. Member:** Who's the question to?

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Mr. Speaker, the rules of the House are that I can specify a minister if I wish, but of course anybody in government is free to answer, so I'm not fussy.

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

**Mr. Myers:** They're dying to answer.

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

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

Certainly, I don't think there's a member in this Legislature, including the member of the third party, that is not aware of this particular policy, and in terms of the total value, it's not a number that I would have here with me today, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

### **Bill reducing MLA severance packages**

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

In the 2015 throne speech, government promised to, and I quote: Bring forward proposals to reduce transitional allowances for MLAs. This was reiterated in the 2016 throne speech, but it's conspicuously absent from the speech that we heard last week.

This is part of a disappointing trend with this government where promises are dropped when they conflict with interests of the Liberal party or Liberal MLAs.

A question to the Premier: Why has government not yet tabled a bill to reduce MLA severance packages?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker and it's been said in this House before that the intention that was mapped out in those statements that are referred to by the Leader of the Third Party would be that whatever decisions were taken would be on a go-forward basis. That's to say, for a further Legislature, that they wouldn't be retroactive in terms of any changes that would or that might be contemplated.

And, in a further part, this is something that concerns all members of the House, and it's something that we should be undertaking in a more collaborative manner, and that will be done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### **Campaign finance reform**

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

Another promise dropped because of party interests is campaign finance reform. The Premier went from progressive reform to minor reform, and now we're back to a discussion paper.

I'm not sure what this government expects to get out of this discussion paper, but it's clear where the consensus lies on this issue.

The federal government and five provinces already banned corporate and union political donations – and BC will soon make that six provinces – and all of the elected parties in this House except the Liberals are now on board.

When will this government bring us in line with best practices and ban corporate and union donations to political parties?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, there is a letter that I wrote to the Leader of the Third Party and the then acting interim Leader of the Official Opposition in – I believe it was – December of last year, spelling out the thinking at the time and the rationale for the position with the indication that there would be further conversations about that. That may indeed be timely to take up, and that is something that we continue to look forward to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### ***Municipal Government Act and amalgamation***

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment regarding the *Municipal Government Act*.

Minister, some municipal leaders in my area are concerned about the MGA. In particular, they feel that you are forcing them to amalgamate. Is that correct, minister?

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

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

Certainly, I would like to assure the hon. member, and in fact all members of the Legislative Assembly here that no, there is absolutely no intention of forcing amalgamation in western PEI, in eastern

PEI, or anywhere in the middle, hon. member.

What we will continue to do and encourage municipalities and communities is to go out and talk to existing communities around them – in other words, their neighbours – to find areas of commonality, common interests, and beneficial outcomes that if they did form some kind of a larger region, how it would benefit them all collectively as a larger region.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, your first supplementary question.

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

Minister, the same municipal leaders are also concerned about the regulation that each municipality will have to hold an all-day election.

Is this set in stone, or is there some possibility that it can be changed?

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

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

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

As I've said before on the floor of the Legislature, the updating of this *Municipal Government Act* is something that hasn't been done for 30 or 40 years, so these are minimum standards that the act will deal with moving forward. It's things that residents of municipalities, and in fact all levels of government, expect of their governments.

Indeed, if there is a contested election on election day, there would be a need to have a full-day election, but we do have to remind ourselves that some of the small municipalities, who in the past have had councils decided by acclimation – well, that will probably continue in the future, and therefore there will be no need for an election as there wasn't in the past. So, moving forward, that's how the *Municipal Government Act* will deal with these situations.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, your second supplementary.

#### **Accessibility of municipal offices**

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

Moving forward with minimum standards, my question, minister, will be: Will you entertain the request to relax the requirement of having a municipal office accessible to all members of the public for a minimum of 20 hours per week?

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Good question.

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

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

Once again, as an updating, or modernization, of this act – you know, requiring a place where residents can go and do their business is certainly a requirement of the act.

What we've been doing as a department is talking with municipalities to say: Who could you share a service with? And identify existing municipalities around them that may have parts or pieces of those that they could work collectively on, and the 20 hours of service could be provided by a neighbouring community.

We will continue to do that with municipalities. If they have any concerns, they can feel free to call myself or members of the department and we will help them in the system in that way.

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

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

#### **Use of EAL support funding**

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

My question today is for the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture. Minister, I was pleased with your

announcement last week of \$1.2 million in much needed supports for EAL students and students whose first language is English.

How will this funding be used?

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

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

I'm pleased to say that our population growth strategy is showing very positive results on Prince Edward Island and that this investment has been made to help to address the issues where young students are landing, particularly in the Charlottetown-Stratford areas, with a \$2.8 million-a-year investment.

We've got 41 new educators that will be put on the front lines in our schools to help with classroom composition issues going forward, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. LaVie:** When?

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

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

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

#### **Role of classroom composition teachers**

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

Minister, a few years ago there was a valuable initiative by the teachers' federation where you would take your MLA to school day. I participated at Spring Park School, and my eyes were opened to the variety of students that made up a classroom: High achievers, those with learning disabilities, those on the autism spectrum disorder, new immigrants.

Minister: Could you let us know what the role of the new classroom composition teachers will be?

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

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

There will be 10 new classroom composition teachers included in this new allocation and those teachers are set out with very specific roles in mind. At the high school level, there will be two teachers put into Colonel Gray and one teacher put into Charlottetown Rural, and those teachers will either allow for new class sections to take place, or team teaching, where in some cases there might be two teachers in a classroom or teachers pulled out.

At Queen Charlotte, there's a new grade 7 homeroom, which will allow for supports to English language arts and where we see them in Glen Stewart and Stratford, as an example, there will be the addition of classroom teachers to help support.

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

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

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

Minister: Are the new positions posted and when do you expect these much needed positions to be filled?

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

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

I am pleased to indicate that at least one of the positions at Colonel Gray has already been filled and we suspect that the balance of the positions at the high school level will be filled by the end of the week. The rest of the positions are either posted or will be filled within the next couple of days, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

### **Industrial waste dumped into Northumberland Strait**

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

The lobster fishery in the Northumberland Strait creates a lot of jobs and economic activities for Islanders.

Question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: Minister, yes or no? Do you support industrial waste being dumped into the Strait or any Island waters?

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

**An Hon. Member:** Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

**Mr. McIsaac:** Mr. Speaker, definitely not.

The Member from Souris-Elmira brings up a very good question, one that is of grave concern, to not only our fishers here, our processors here and those of us who consume lobsters. We do not want any waste going into the Northumberland Strait.

I have had letters from Nova Scotia fishermen. I've spoken with the PEI Fishermen's Association about this, and two weeks ago I was in Nova Scotia. I spoke with my counterpart, hon. Keith Colwell. I came home and wrote a letter to him expressing the dire concern we have about this, and we want this plant cleaned up, but not by dumping the waste into the Northumberland Strait.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

### **PEIFA and representatives meeting in Moncton**

Second question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries. The PEIFA and other fisheries representatives attended an information (Indistinct) Pictou in Moncton this month. You chose not to attend.

Minister: Did you send any of your staff over to this meeting?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

I did not attend the meeting. I'm not sure if I had staff at that meeting. I know we had staff over at the right whale meeting that was put on my the hon. Dominic LeBlanc, but this usually was something that we have really keyed in on, and we also wrote to – copied the letter to the federal minister as well because this is of dire concern.

This is one of our largest industries here. How can some private operation dump wastewater into the stream? We, as a government and agriculture, we spend so much time in stewardship and making sure that we keep the waters clean. We have the wastewater treatment dollars that we spend, over \$90 million, to make sure that the waters are clean. We cannot have this effluent coming from that plant going into the waters that could affect not only our lobster fishery, but also those in Nova Scotia.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

Another question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries. Minister, your staff is responsible for technical aspects of the Water Act.

### **Wastewater and Water Act**

Minister: How does wastewater pipelines dumping discharge into PEI waters fit into your long-delayed Water Act?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

We spend a lot of dollars through our department working on this very issue. We

do not want waste of any kind going into the streams. We put a lot of dollars into this program, through the stewardship program. If there are pipes that are going into the water, we like to hear about it. We heard about a couple last year and worked on them to get them cleaned up. If the hon. member knows of others, certainly bring it to our attention and we will look into it.

But our greatest concern is that we keep these waters clean. It can affect one of the largest industries in this province, and we cannot have something like that happen again.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

Again, a question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries; 19,800 pumper fire trucks worth each day that will have a huge impact on the long-term health of our lobster industry, recreational fishery, shell fishery and the Northumberland Strait itself.

Minister, I stand with our fishers and I oppose this project into the Strait, will you do the same?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Definitely, and we're on record right now of me – like I know that I made with Honourable Keith Colwell, spoke with him on this when I was in Nova Scotia two weeks ago, written a letter to him to follow that up so that he could it to his environment minister to make sure that everyone on that side is well aware, which I know they are. I copied it to Dominic LeBlanc, our federal minister.

We are working on this because we do not want this effluent – the pipe change to go into the Strait where our lobster are. This is

a massive industry for our province and for Nova Scotia, as well.

We are fully behind the fishermen in both Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island to make sure that this does not happen. We implore the company to make sure when they do the clean up, they do it some other way than dumping the waste into the Strait.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

Another question to the minister of agriculture and forestry: Minister, people send emails. People send letters that happens all the time.

What else are we doing, are you doing, as a minister to stop this project from dumping into the Northumberland Strait?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

I think the key here is to make sure we have the communication lines open and working full blast.

I've heard from the fishermen in Nova Scotia. I've met with the PEI Fishermen's Association here. I have spoken to the provincial minister of fisheries in Nova Scotia. I have written to the minister, copied it to his environment minister and the federal minister, LeBlanc.

We have to keep the communications going. We have to make sure everyone knows the seriousness of this issue. The plant does need to be refurbished. We have to have it cleaned up, but not dumping effluent into the Strait. They have a responsibility to clean up the issue, but not put the wastewater into our fishing area.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Another question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: Yes, this plant has to be refurbished. Fishers, are not against this plant whatsoever as long as it's built in-land. They don't want it dumping into the Island water.

Minister: Have we done any work on what legal action we could take and will you take legal action if need be?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

We have looked into the fact that there is a plant, a similar plant in Saskatchewan, which is in-land. They did the refurbishment. They didn't dump into a water source. That's what we're following up on. I think the plant has to be refurbished by 2020. In that time period, we will keep the communication lines open so we do not have to end up in court over this. Let's give them the message, work with them, and hopefully solve this problem before it ever gets to that stage.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

[End of Question Period]