



Session:	3/65
Date:	23 November 2017
No:	6

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

THURSDAY, 23 NOVEMBER 2017



Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

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

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

As we've all heard, a referendum on electoral reform will be held alongside the next provincial general election, which is scheduled to take place in October of 2019.

**Referendum and *Election Act***

A question to the Premier: Do you plan to hold this referendum under the *Election Act* as it is currently written?

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

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

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

The Premier did address this the other day. We do plan to have a referendum. It will be in conjunction with the next provincial election, and the whole idea of it will be debated here in the House before we go forward.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Recommendations for change to *Election Act***

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

The 2015 report of the Chief Electoral Officer noted that the *Election Act* has not seen any substantial changes in nearly a quarter of a century, and that report contained 44 recommendations for changes to be made to the act.

Again, a question to the Premier: How many of those 44 recommendations have been implemented so far?

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

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

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

We hope to have a good debate on this whole topic coming into the New Year and the spring session. We'll deal with many of those issues at that time with a great debate from all three sides of the House.

Thank you very much, 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 don't believe, and the gentleman across just more or less confirmed, that these proposed changes have not been referred to the legislative committee for public input, nor have any of the 44 recommendations been put in place yet.

So, again, a question to the Premier: Will any of these 44 recommended changes be made before the next election in October of 2019?

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

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

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

I believe we're going to have a great debate on this whole topic. I think it's very important, very interesting to all the people across the province. They expect those results to come from this House from all three parties and beginning in the New Year, we'll deal with whatever issues it may be, so that when it comes to the next provincial election, this will be a ballot question that

everyone across the province will have a say in.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, neither the *Election Act*, nor the elections financing act have been modernized in many, many years. New legislation for the referendum will also be needed.

#### **Public consultations and DR committee**

Again, question to the Premier: Will the Special Committee on Democratic Renewal be leading the public consultations on these laws that need updating before the next election, which is to be held in October of 2019?

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

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

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

Again, the promise and commitment was made that we would have this debate in the Legislature, we would have the question asked at the next election. If there are changes needed to legislation, I'm sure they can be made before that time. We introduce legislation here every session – gets passed in the session, goes forward as law. If there's need to be changes in that area, I'm sure they will be looked at, brought forward, and dealt with by all parties of the Legislature.

Thank you very much, 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 was referring to public consultations and not just debate here in the House, so it sounds like there's not going to be any public discussion.

Under the provinces' fixed election date, Islanders will be going to the polls in October, 2019, but Islanders have already seen this Premier disregard our fixed election date laws when it suits his political agenda and interest.

With all the work piling up: referendum legislation, updating the *Election Act* and the election financing act, it's important to have all of these pieces in place before Islanders go to the polls.

#### **Respect of current fixed election dates**

Question to the Premier: Will you commit to respect the current fixed election dates of October, 2019 to allow proper time to let Islanders have their say on these very important democratic reforms before you send Islanders to the polls?

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

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

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

I can assure you I'll not be sending anybody to the polls, that's for sure. But we will state very emphatically: we are going to have a debate on this issue. It's going to be dealt with here. People will have their say. I know when I'm at Tim Hortons in Stratford, we discuss lots of issues. This is one of them. People do want to know what's going on; they want to know what we'll be debating; they want to know what the question will be; and long before the election is held, that decision will be made. Everyone in this House will have an opportunity to help in what that decision may be and what the question may be as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Raising of taxes on Island small businesses**

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

A question to the Premier: Why were you so afraid to take a stand with the federal government over their plans to raise taxes on Island small businesses?

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

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

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

In this province we've had the opportunity to hear from lots of businesses. I've attended a number of meetings myself and I, myself, have spoken to a number of businesses and heard the concerns and certainly heard the concerns that were shared with me from other MLAs in this Legislature.

We support some of the concerns that the Island businesses have and we have sent a letter to the minister of finance – Minister Morneau in Ottawa.

Thank you.

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

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

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

So it's great to hear that we're sending letters in lieu of picking up the phone, or phoning them, or maybe talking to the Prime Minister when he's in town, or any other opportunity that you could have to actually show Ottawa that you're not pleased with them calling Island businesses 'tax cheats'.

When my colleague from Belfast-Murray River here raised the issue, Premier's response was that it was a federal matter and he washed his hands of it.

Question to the Premier: Why was your first instinct to leave Island businesses, farmers, and health professionals twisting in the wind to fend for themselves?

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

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

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

As all Islanders, we listened to the announcement that was made. It is a federal tax, it's not a provincial tax and even around our caucus table we had concerns with what's in there and we have raised that with the minister of finance. In fact, in the next few weeks I will be meeting with the minister of finance myself.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

When we tried to have this tax-grab brought before committee, the government MLAs tried to run interference. The education minister tried to interfere with bringing people forward, the Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point tried to interfere with bringing people forward.

Question to the Premier: Did you order your MLAs and try to prevent this issue from making it to committee because you weren't interested in it?

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

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

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

If I recall, the federal government ran consultations across the country on this and that they did continue. It's my understanding that the federal government has said that they will relook at this and they will extend the date on it.

I think this is probably most appropriate place, right here in this Legislature, to have a discussion and a debate on this.

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

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

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

We've heard from the finance minister that that he's only now just planning to go to Ottawa to talk to the finance minister – maybe it's a job interview, what do we know? Nobody has gone to date. It's been such a long period.

Do you know what? I give credit to the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park. He was down when the Charlottetown chamber met about this issue. He showed his face. Not a single cabinet minister came down to support the Island businesses who were being called 'tax-cheats' by the Prime Minister and Bill Morneau.

Government's attempt to keep this issue from the committee predictably failed and we heard from a very informative and relative accountant here in Charlottetown who said that this was basically a tax-grab and it was going to hurt Island businesses.

Question to the Premier: Were you just trying to avoid trying to have to take a stand against Ottawa for Islanders?

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

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

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

was really please to be able to attend that meeting with the Charlottetown Chamber of Commerce and, as a matter of fact, I was sitting directly behind the Member from Belfast-Murray River during the entire session. I did have the opportunity on that day to hear from many businesses and I took their concerns to heart. With respect to the meeting with the federal minister, Minister Morneau, those meetings are planned well in advance. That meeting with him was probably planned back at least a month and a half, maybe two months, ago.

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

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

### Letters to Bill Morneau

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

Island taxpayers are getting really sick of this government not standing up to the Prime Minister and Bill Morneau. There used to be a time when Island governments went to Ottawa and fought for Islanders. You guys just seem to be going along with whatever you're told to do. It's embarrassing.

Obviously the Premier didn't want to rock the boat with his Ottawa friends and their attempt to tax grab. He actually wrote two letters to Bill Morneau: one was an extremely soft one and the second one was a moderately soft one.

Question to the Premier: Why did it take you two letters to try to get your point across to Bill Morneau?

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

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

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

I think it's tremendous that the Premier did send two letters and I think that shows that this government is interested. We're very concerned. Our Island businesses have done extremely well over the last number of years. They're growing, they're doing well, we've supported them through this growth period, and we'll continue to support them. We'll support them at the table when it comes tax talks in Ottawa.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

So the finance minister wants to take all the answers on this file, I'll ask a question to the finance minister.

### Raising of taxes on Island small businesses (further)

Question to the finance minister: How much money did you stand to gain by Justin Trudeau and Bill Morneau's greedy tax-grab from Island businesses?

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

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

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

I would remind the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters that this is not finalized by any means. There are still a lot of discussions that are taking place. We have not, nor are we going to, start putting any kind of a value on a tax bill that doesn't exist yet.

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

**An Hon. Member:** Good.

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

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

It's funny you can put phantom numbers around a fibre optic network that you have no idea how much it's going to cost to build. Phantom numbers are okay when you're giving phantom numbers. You can't give phantom numbers that matter to Islanders. There's a reason why you didn't go to Ottawa and stand up for Island businesses. It's because you guys need the money. You guys can't get control your own spending, so you need the money. You're desperate to get the money so you won't stand up for Islanders because you stand to fill your own pockets with money.

Question to the finance minister: Will you admit to the House today that the reason why you don't stand up for Island businesses is because you, yourself, stand to gain from it?

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

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

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

I think we all heard that question. No. My answer to that question is: No.

We have worked extremely hard with Island businesses. We work well with them from tip to tip on this Island. That's how we've

grown our economy here. That's why we're doing so well in moving forward as an Island. That's where we get our dollars to be able to reinvest, and there's no false numbers or phantom numbers around here. I assure you of that.

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

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

### **Government relationships with Morneau Shepell**

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

Question to the finance minister: How many departments or agencies of government currently have ongoing business relationships with Morneau Shepell?

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

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) job interview too?

**Mr. Roach:** Mr. Speaker, I don't have the answer to that, but I'd be more than willing to check within our departments that may have some sort of contact with that service. I'll ask that question and bring it back.

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

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

### **Taxpayers' dollars spent on Morneau Shepell services**

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

Morneau Shepell is a leading, national HR firm and the family business of the federal finance minister.

Question to the finance minister of PEI: Would you happen to know how much Island taxpayers have spent on services from Morneau Shepell?

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

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

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

I have not talked to each and every one of the departments in PEI, but I'd certainly be willing to go back through my finance department to look at what services may be provided and bring that back to the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I'll save the finance minister that work. According to written questions between 2009 and 2017, Island taxpayers have spent at least \$1.1 million to Morneau Shepell.

**Mr. Myers:** Oh.

**Publicly tendered dollars to Morneau Shepell**

**Ms. Compton:** That's what we paid to them.

Question to the finance minister: Was there \$1 of that 1.1 million paid to Morneau Shepell publicly tendered?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

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

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

I know that there is a process in place, but particularly when it comes to – and I don't know what the business is, I've never sat down and read that – I know that there is a process that takes place, whether it's investments of some of our investments, or whether it's our pension programs, but that's something that certainly would follow a process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Not one penny of that money was tendered.

**Mr. Myers:** Oh.

**Ms. Compton:** One of Morneau Shepell's specialties is pensions. In fact, Morneau Shepell was Wes Sheridan's main advisor when your government cut the pensions of current and retired public servants and teachers.

**Mr. Myers:** Oh.

**Dollars paid to Morneau Shepell for advice on pension cuts**

**Ms. Compton:** Question to the finance minister: How much did your government pay Morneau Shepell for advice on how to cut the pensions of current and retired public servants and teachers?

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

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

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

I know that when it comes to our pension, that they are run by an independent advisory board and I would have to go back to my department and –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Roach:** – look at perhaps, some of the notes that came out of those meetings –

**Mr. Myers:** I see nothing (Indistinct)

**Mr. Roach:** – and see what would apply and what I could bring back to this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Well, no answer. I can share with you. Between 2011 and 2014, Morneau Shepell

was paid \$477,779 by this government, by your government, so it looks like the business of cutting pensions pays well.

Question to the finance minister: After you paid Morneau Shepell all of that money to help you cut pensions, shouldn't their bill have gone down?

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

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

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

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Roach:** I know that I didn't have any direct involvement in that file at that time, but I don't know and I don't necessarily agree with the assertion of the Member from Belfast-Murray River that it was all about the pensions being cut. It's my impression, from what my memory recalls at that time, it was about ensuring that our pensions –

**Mr. Myers:** Now he remembers.

**Mr. Roach:** – were solid and stable in the future.

**Mr. Myers:** You can't remember, can't remember.

**Mr. Roach:** Regardless of the market and how that market may fluctuate, my recall on that is that the pensions today are doing very well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Again, according to responses to written questions that you gave the House, the biggest single payment to Morneau Shepell came during the 2014-2015 fiscal year when Wes Sheridan and the Premier were finance minister; over \$500,000.

What work did they do for government that cost \$524,086 for 2014-2015?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

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

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

**Mr. Myers:** Don't worry. We know where that money went.

**Mr. Roach:** During those years, I was a minister of a separate portfolio. But, as I said earlier, I will return, talk to my staff, and see what information on that I can bring back to this Legislature –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

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

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

**Mr. Myers:** Calling the house doctor.

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

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

In Wes Sheridan's last year as finance minister, your government paid Morneau Shepell over \$500,000 and six months later, Sheridan is working for Morneau Shepell.

**Mr. Myers:** Oh.

**Ms. Compton:** Quite a timely coincidence.

**Mr. Myers:** Oh.

**Former finance minister working for Morneau Shepell**

**Ms. Compton:** Question to the finance minister: Did this cozy arrangement raise any red flags for you, or did the Premier say: This was money well spent and let's just go with it.

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

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

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

I've had no conversation with the former minister about when he was going to leave politics or when he was going to retire but, if I recall correctly, any MLA that leaves this Legislature, I believe it's in the agreement that they are not allowed to take any kind of a job or placement –

**Mr. Myers:** Oh, half a million dollars will last six months.

**Mr. Roach:** – with any business or with any company until six months elapse –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) in the safe until he got there.

**Mr. Roach:** – and then they're allowed to move on and take whatever –

**Mr. Myers:** He just put it in the safe until he got (Indistinct)

**Mr. Roach:** – appointment they want after that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

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

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

In media interviews, after landing his new job, Wes Sheridan credited the work he did with Morneau Shepell on cutting public sector pensions with giving him the experience needed to pursue a private sector career with Morneau Shepell; experience bought and paid for by Island taxpayers in untendered contracts and pension cuts.

#### **Review of former minister to ethics commissioner**

Question to the finance minister: In light of this cozy relationship, and Wes Sheridan's conduct on the e-gaming scandal, did you refer any of these matters to the Premier or the ethics commissioner for further review?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

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

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

I'm not prepared to comment on any comments that a former minister has made after they left this Legislature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

#### **Occupational health and safety inspections in food processing plants**

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

A question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: Given that farm workers are exempt from the protections of virtually all other workers received under the *Employment Standards Act*, does the minister agree that occupational health and safety inspections are critically important to protect the wellbeing of farm workers?

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

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

The safety of our farm workers is of utmost importance. I think we have, in our agriculture community as well as in our fisheries community, employers who are very conscious of that. We need the workers there. We encourage anyone who wants to get a job in agriculture; it is a growing area, as is the fishery, and safety in the workplace is of utmost importance.

Thank you very much, 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.

I have to agree with the minister. But it's come to our attention that certain large food processors on the Island receive advanced notice of occupational health and safety inspections, allowing them to prepare for it, essentially to cheat inspections.

When will this government end this practice and bring in random and unannounced inspections?

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

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

I'm a little thrown off by that type of comment. I've never heard of any cheating such as that. We're very conscious of the need to have worker safety. We've involved worker's compensation with the workers since that time, and that's proof of the point right there.

If you can bring forward some of the comments, proof of what you're saying, we'll certainly check it out, that's for sure.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### **Exemptions for farm workers**

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

The main reason for exempting farm workers from normal protections is to accommodate small family farms, but the blanket exemption that we have on PEI is used by large operations as well.

Other provinces have found ways to accommodate small farms without the blanket exemption on all farm workers that we have here. New Brunswick, for example, limits the exemption to small farms with three or fewer employees.

Why is this government still allowing large agricultural operations to avoid providing the same working standards for their workers as are guaranteed to other workers on PEI and other parts of Canada?

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

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

I know we work with the federation, with different farm groups, and we brought – worked with the Workers Compensation Board to meet with farm groups, farm organizations, and farmers themselves to make sure that their employees are covered under workers compensation.

A lot of them were covered under WCB before, but now it is in place for that, and we think that's very important, because again, we find the labour force needs to be covered, and we think this, the workers compensation piece, is a strong piece for that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### **Locating defibrillators in public places**

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

My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Emergency health situations can be very scary for bystanders witnessing someone in distress or in need of medical assistance. Time is of the essence in these situations, and there is a need to act fast.

In order to expedite health in the case for heart attack or stroke, the first step is to locate a defibrillator to provide a quick response.

Minister: Is your department close to offering a defibrillator registry that could assist in locating the nearest AED in such situations?

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

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

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

As the hon. member has been a big advocate for many topics and issues pertaining to health care, he is correct in saying that our department is in the process of developing an automated external defibrillator registry, and we have now purchased the software to put information into that, and we will be sending out letters to municipalities and sporting and recreation facilities across this Island to see if they would like to volunteer to add their particular defibrillator to the registry, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, your first supplementary.

### **No mandatory requirement for defibrillators in sporting facilities**

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

Minister, community rinks are important locations for these AEDs. Can you tell the House if these community rinks are required to have these defibrillators?

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, there are many defibrillators out there across this province, and we have actually had programs to allow some support for defibrillators, especially in recreational sporting facilities. There's not a mandatory requirement to have that from our government perspective, but once we do know that there a lot of sporting facilities that do have these defibrillators, and we want to make sure we have a registry and that we can identify where these locations are for these particular defibrillators, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, your second supplementary question.

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

Can the minister inform the House if all of the emergency staff and dispatchers have

completed the enhanced training for EMD protocol?

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, I did have the opportunity, probably about a month ago, to go out to our Island EMS headquarters and dispatch location and take a look at some of the issues that are pertaining to AEDs and the protocol for when a 911 call comes in, and yes we have now – all our staff are trained at Island EMS, as well as a number of Health PEI staff are trained in this and operational, but we have to wait until we get the map.

So all the protocols are in place to handle the response of that nature, but we just now have to have the map so we can accurately make sure that those Island EMS staff can dispatch where the information to where these AEDs are located.

**An Hon. Member:** That's good.

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

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

### **Access to post-secondary education**

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that getting a postsecondary diploma or degree is more important now than ever. As MLAs, we have a responsibility to ensure we are making higher learning as accessible as possible for our youth by removing barriers.

My question is to the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning: What is your department doing to ensure that all Islanders have equal access, or have access to, postsecondary education?

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

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

Thank you very much for the question, hon. member. I'd certainly like to inform this House that the Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning is doing all they can

for students to achieve in the secondary education.

We've done many programs and we've put out \$30 million in provincial and federal student loans. With the help of, and the lobbying of, the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road we initiated the Career Connect this year, which is very useful for students to help them reduce their loans to get an education. We came out with some programs called Team Seafood, Team Construction, and Team Youth Trucking which provide a bursary after these students have finished this during the summer months, and it's great for the industries, and it helps them get a feel if that's what they'd like to do into the future.

We also have the Graduate Mentorship Program, and I got an email from an individual just a couple of weeks ago thanking our department for what a great help that was, and she got fulltime work in that in her career of studies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

#### **Parental contribution requirements for student loan assessments**

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

I want to thank the minister for that, and I know, speaking with many parents and students across the Island, they're very appreciative of what this government is doing to help them with their postsecondary education.

However, you did mention one of the barriers, and that was student loans, and the existing barrier, in fact, with student loans is when the students are applying, the income of their parents is taken into consideration, and whether that's willingness to pay, or if they're not even able to financially contribute to their child's education. I know it's been a priority of the student unions here on PEI, and they've mentioned that this barrier still remains.

Will the minister consider eliminating the provincial portion of the student loan assessment that takes into consideration parental income and the expected contribution from parents?

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

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

Hon. member, to your question, there's many things that we do, as I had indicated earlier, and we do talk with the other provinces and our federal counterparts, and we have been able to come up with some things to help students, like there's the one-year relief after they graduate to pay back their student loan, and only about 25% of students need parental assistance, and out of those, 17% require only about \$1,000 from their parents, so I mean this is something that our department can certainly look at, but at this point we're just looking at it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I thank you, minister. But we want to make it accessible to all Island students.

New Brunswick has recently removed the parental contribution requirement for their provincial portion for student loans, and I think we should follow New Brunswick's lead on this.

Additionally, I want to ask if you will speak to your federal counterpart about moving this from the portion of the federal assessment for student loans.

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

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

To the answer to your question, it's certainly something we can talk about, but let me remind this House that enrollment at UPEI and Holland College are up considerably

this year. UPEI has the second-lowest tuition in Atlantic Canada, and as I said earlier, we've done what we can for default in payments to help our students.

So anything we can do to help students get an education, we'll do our best.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Expensed night in hotel**

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

I'm so glad the Premier could join us this afternoon.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh.

**Mr. Fox:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier's expenses from last month were posted on the website yesterday.

Premier: Why did you expense to the taxpayers of PEI a night-stay for a wedding reception in New Brunswick?

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

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I was in Moncton the previous night to make a speech to the Atlantic Political Science Association and, indeed, I'll note that I didn't charge for the bridge for that trip and the further night, the Saturday night, was the wedding of the Premier of New Brunswick and my view, Mr. Speaker, was that I was invited because I was the Premier of Prince Edward Island. It actually didn't end up costing that much – it was about \$120 or \$130.

**Mr. Myers:** Not much to you.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I was there in my capacity as Premier.

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

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

Well I can tell you, that money means a lot to Islanders.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier billed Islanders to stay at a fancy inn, which bills itself as a private, fully equipped vacation resort.

**Mr. Myers:** Oh.

**Mr. Fox:** At a time when Islanders are asking for affordable housing. The Premier's billing taxpayers to attend a wedding reception.

Question to the Premier: Why did you bill this expense?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Part of the work of Premier –

**Mr. Myers:** I am entitled and entitled to my entitlements.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – part of the work of Premier is, indeed, is to have relations with other governments. Indeed, I spent quite a bit of time today with the Prime Minister and I think that's something that will be to the benefit –

**Mr. Myers:** Couldn't afford a hundred bucks.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – over time to the Province of Prince Edward Island and we have very good relations with the other provinces in this region and we work together. That was the case. I will say that my expenses for everything that's being talked about here; personal expenses, travel, is about less than a half compared to what you would find if you compared for the previous 10 years to when I became Premier.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Fox:** We have over 150 Islanders waiting for long care nursing beds. This government refused to act on this critical

situation. Meanwhile, we have the Premier who's expensing a wedding weekend stay at a fancy resort.

Question to the Premier: Why did you expense this?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, that was an opportunity to be there and I believed at the time, and I still believe, that I was invited in my capacity as Premier –

**Mr. Myers:** Why? Because he doesn't like you personally?

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – and I invite all hon. members – they're obviously looking very closely every time I expense something – I'd be interested to see what the total was for that month or the month before for my travel, but I think you'll probably find I'm the cheapest and the most parsimonious Premier that's ever served in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Fox:** Well, we have schools across PEI with leaky roofs, resorting to buckets and towels on the floor – no money to fix them, according to the minister, but the Premier bills us for a wedding reception.

Why did you bill this expense?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I'm sure it was as recently as last Friday that the opposition was saying we were spending too much in the Capital Budget, although I will note that it's the biggest number we've seen for education in the Capital Budget in a very long time. For those investments, and for the maintenance, and for the work that we're doing to keep up schools in all parts of our province and we're proud of that.

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

**Mr. LaVie:** Heard that for three elections now.

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

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

Since this Premier took office, Island children have been waiting years and years to see a child psychologist, yet the Premier bills us for personal wedding trips.

Why did you bill this expense?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, since the same question has been asked four times, I'll add something that might be of interest to the hon. member opposite: I hitchhike from Moncton to St. Andrews that day. I was very happy to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

**Mr. Myers:** I'm not sure if he thinks it's a joke to him or –

**Mr. Fox:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can't actually believe that the Premier thinks this is a joke, because it's not a joke. We're talking about taxpayers' money. We're talking about a Premier who made a quote: We're running a very tight ship and a responsible ship – Premier Wade MacLauchlan, 2016.

We continue to take the Premier to task for failing to recognize poverty across PEI and take action, and instead the Premier drives through the province – according to him, he hitchhiked – on his way to a wedding weekend at a fancy resort.

A question to the Premier: Why did you bill this expense?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, let me add further on the point of our fiscal management, or our approach to both the

revenues and the expenses in our stewardship as government. The Minister of Finance produced yesterday the second quarter report that showed that, indeed, our surplus is up modestly and that we're using those resources for the needs of Islanders, and previously produced through the blue books a report that our deficit is very small for the previous year, and we're proud of that and we're doing a good job of running the affairs of this province.

Thank you.

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

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

**Mr. Fox:** Well, Mr. Speaker, a simple question: If this was your cousin's wedding, would you expense that?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**An Hon. Member:** It wasn't.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I often remind the premier of New Brunswick that his earliest ancestor, Michel Gallant-Haché did indeed live and is buried at Rocky Point, but to the best of my knowledge, we're not cousins, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Premier MacLauchlan:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

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

Well, when we caught the Premier on his first-class train trip last year, he said – again I will state it – we are running a very tight and responsible ship.

Yet, questionable expenses keep on coming up by this Premier.

A question to the Premier: Why did you expense this trip?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, following that great discovery last year, I in fact tabled in this House my expenses from the time that I have become Premier and in comparison to two previous premiers. I invite members to have a look at that, but just to be sure that they didn't miss it, I'll table that again tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### **Failure to post expenses of departments**

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

Late expenses, missing expenses, and inappropriate expenses: Last month's expenses were due online yesterday. The ministers and deputies of workforce, health, education, environment, and family and human services all failed to post their expenses and follow the rules.

**Mr. Trivers:** Shame, shame!

**Mr. Fox:** Premier, a question to you: Why can't your government follow any rules, even your own?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to remind the House that those requirements of posting those automatically and for ministers and for senior officials were brought in after I became Premier –

**Mr. Trivers:** All talk and no action. (Indistinct)

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – and those are done regularly on a timely basis –

**Mr. Trivers:** Got a problem.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – and if it's the case that there's something needed to be signed, or something because we're in the House, I'm sure it's going to be up there before the end of the week.

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

**Premier MacLauchlan:** We're proud of the openness and transparency that this government has brought in, and we intend to, and we do, live up to it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

[End of Question Period]