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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

FRIDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2017



Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

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

**New funding for teachers**

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

I was intrigued the government's recent announcement on the new teachers didn't actually make their throne speech. I suspect many Islanders were keen for the details around this new announcement.

My first question is to the Premier: Is this new funding going to be permanent year-to-year or just a one-time funding?

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

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

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

This funding is a result of the increase in the school population that came post the May-June allocation of teaching resources to schools that occurs every year and is kind of set-in on September 1<sup>st</sup> when school starts. From the May-June time until the September 1<sup>st</sup> time, and indeed right up through to this point, there was a large influx of students due to the success of our immigration program and our population growth strategy. We reacted with \$2.8 million worth of frontline teaching resources.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

This didn't happen overnight. In fact, Stratford Elementary has 86 pupils in their school, which represents 18% of the school population and these children don't speak English.

The issue with class sizes in our schools in Charlottetown and Stratford aren't going to be fixed overnight.

Again, question to the Premier: If you feel these new positions will make a difference, then why wouldn't you ensure the funding continues past the end of this school year and into future years? Why are you just doing it for one 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 advise that since October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016 and until October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017, there were roughly 30 new immigrant children that came into Stratford Elementary. We will continue to work with the Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation, the principals of the affected schools, the Public Schools Branch, and the French Language School Board to ensure that our students have the resources that they need on the front lines in the classrooms.

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'm asking some fairly straight-forward questions here and, unfortunately, I'm not getting an answer that I require from the Premier.

**Permanent or one-off positions for teachers**

So, what I'm asking, very clearly, these positions that you announced, are they going to be permanent positions, embedded in our school system, or is this just a one-off for 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.

So, hon. Member, the way this works is that every May-June there is an allocation of teaching resources based on the classroom compositions in the various schools and the make-ups where they're required. This is something that we have been looking to work and collaborate more with the Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation to ensure that we are doing the best that we possibly can be on a forward-looking basis, Mr. Speaker. That's what this announcement was all about and as I've indicated –

**Mr. Myers:** Satisfying a union?

**Mr. J. Brown:** – before, we've worked to ensure that there's room to grow with this, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Let's worry about classrooms. Let's not worry about unions, Union Man.

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

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

I think that all Islanders can see through this announcement and what it was really about and what it was really about. It was made in haste during a by-election in District 11.

So, we've been hearing from a number of parents both confused and concerned about these positions. As the details for this announcement get fleshed-out, they're learning that: number one, they are not going to be permanent positions past the school year; number two, these positions will not be added to the permanent staffing compliment for these schools.

Question to the Premier: Why are we content with reactive, Band-Aid solutions to structural problems?

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

**Mr. Trivers:** No plan.

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

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you very much –

**Mr. Myers:** – answer some questions.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – Mr. Speaker.

Hon. member, the first thing I would say is that there is no permanent teaching complement for any school. Teachers are allocated at the first of each year. And, indeed, in May, June of each year –

**Mr. Myers:** Even November –

**Mr. J. Brown:** – for the upcoming year –

**Mr. Myers:** – (Indistinct) by-election –

**Mr. J. Brown:** – they are allocated based on the projected enrollment of that school –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** – for that upcoming year.

What we've done, is we've allowed for a flexible mechanism here to address an issue that has resulted from a very successful growth strategy, and we feel that it's a great way to address frontline teaching issues.

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

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

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

There was a home and school meeting recently held at Stratford elementary and I just want to read a very short quote. Essentially, what this funding is going to mean to SES is that we will get a 0.5 of a teacher to provide EAL. We currently have two EALs in the school so we will have 2.5 EFTEs for 86 children who don't even speak the language.

This is the quote: We can do better than that. Our kids deserve better than this –

**Mr. Myers:** Believe in better.

**Leader of the Opposition:** – believe in better.

Some of these class sizes and composition issues, as I said before, are structural in nature. Temporary top-ups to staff and complement in these schools are not a viable long-term solution.

### **Review of instructional staffing models**

Again, question to the Premier: Premier, will you commit to reviewing the instructional staffing model to identify a better long-term solution to support our students and our teachers?

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

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

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

As I've indicated, the way the model works right now is that in May, June there is an allocation made based on the resources that are predicated to be required for September of that year.

One of the earliest meetings that I had in this role was to meet with the Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation, and to discuss with them what we might be able to do to address classroom composition issues that are arising as a result of our –

**Mr. Myers:** Hope there's a by-election next year –

**Mr. J. Brown:** – very successful population –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) get them back.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – growth strategy.

That's something that I've committed to work with them on –

**Mr. Myers:** By-election (Indistinct) teachers.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – and we've committed to our principals, to our home and schools and to everybody else that looks to ensure the best education for our students is there to work on together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

### **Timeline for replacement of Sherwood school**

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

All week we've been having a good discussion about the Capital Budget. Really pulling information out of this government, and I wanted to come back to something said last evening.

A question to the minister of transportation: Minister, what is the timeline for replacement of the Sherwood school?

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

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

Now we want to hear it again.

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

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

I did, indeed, address this issue last evening. As we had indicated we're going to be setting to work within the next year to get together a committee to look at what that school might look like.

From that point forward, there will be architects that will be engaged to move forward on it. Ultimately, we would expect that we would see students in that school in 2021.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

It's good to hear that there's going to be a committee to strike a committee to figure out what they're going to do.

We all know that there is, seriously, there's a whole planning process involved with capital projects involving design and other considerations. We know that. It can take a bit of time to get all the pieces together.

Again, a question to the transportation minister: When would be the earliest that students at Sherwood school could see shovels in the ground at work on their new school?

**Mr. Myers:** That's a great question.

**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 suggest that the most likely time would be some time in 2019 that we would see construction of that school begin.

As I had indicated last night, the answer to that question depends on what resources are required in terms of land to do it; what can be done on the existing envelope and how that can be done in connection with the school that sits there right now. And any other requirements that are set out through the planning process to address ongoing learning that will need to occur at the premises, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

### **Contingency plans in dealing with issues at Sherwood school**

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

This is why it's important we ask these questions because, last night, the earliest actual construction on the new school, we ascertained, would happen is 2021. The issues at the current school will still be there this year, next year and so on, until the new school is ready in, say, I don't know 2023?

A question to the education minister: What contingency plans are in place to deal with the issues at Sherwood school in the meantime?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

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

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

Hon. member, I don't think that I led you astray last night, but if I did, my apologies for that –

**An Hon. Member:** You didn't.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – and I think, clearly, what I had said last night was that the project would be complete in the 2021-2022 budget and students would be in there in that school year, so September of that year.

It takes time, hon. member, to plan properly for this kind of construction. To get the construction underway and to complete the construction and that's why we have it in this five-year \$60 million construction project.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

So we haven't heard about what's going to happen in the meantime.

A facilities review of Sherwood school done for the Public Schools Branch school review last November identified major renovations needed in the next five years, i.e.: probably before the new school is built.

The bathrooms, energy management, and humidification systems need upgrading. Oil tanks and boilers need replacing. And a partial roof replacement is required.

A question to the education minister: What is the plan to address issues like these while students wait for a new school?

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

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

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

Yes, as the hon. member has indicated, there are a number of issues with Sherwood school. That's why we have committed the funds required over a five-year planning horizon to deal with those issues. That's exactly what the five-year budget planning process is for, is to make that commitment so that those students and the community around Sherwood school understands our commitment to them and to education in that area, hon. member.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

By the time the new school is completed most of the current students will be graduated, and I don't know what they're going to do in the meantime.

The other day the minister told this House about an existing priority list for capital work. That was when the Member from Morell-Mermaid raised the still leaking roof at Mount Stewart.

The minister was asked to table the priority list and the minister refused leaving us all wondering what other projects might be on it.

#### **Accessibility lift for Birchwood school students with disabilities**

A question to the education minister: Where, on the capital priority list, is the accessibility

lift for students with disabilities at Birchwood school?

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

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

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

Hon. member, I would take the opportunity again, to correct you as to what my recollection is as to what I said. I had said that it's a Public Schools Branch that's in charge of determining capital priorities that exist outside of new construction –

**Mr. Myers:** Why are you guys announcing it then?

**Mr. J. Brown:** – it's them that maintain the list –

**Mr. Myers:** Why aren't they making (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** – and what I committed to the hon. member was not to table that list, it was to go ask for the list and see what we could get. They would continuously prioritize that list based on the requirements that are there today –

**Mr. Myers:** You made the announcement.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – so I would expect that it would be them that would determine when that would come –

**Mr. Myers:** They don't (Indistinct)

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

I mean over here we believe in openness and transparency and we would love to see the priorities list.

The Public Schools Branch flagged a number of issues at Charlottetown schools as part of the school review.

**Accessibility lift for Prince Street school students with disabilities**

Question to the education minister: Where on the capital priority list is the accessibility lift for students with disabilities at Prince Street school?

**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 think I've answered that question in relation to a different school. Again, it's the Public Schools Branch that would determine where the needs lie and what the priorities should be. That happened through the school review process, and we're very happy to have had the opportunity to identify those issues, and we will work with the Public Schools Branch to ensure that through their priority budgeting process we can deal with those issues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**HVAC replacement at Parkdale school**

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

The last time I checked the legislation, the Public Schools Branch reports to the minister of education. Oh wait, or maybe that's directly to the Premier.

Question to the education minister: Where on the capital priority list is the HVAC replacement at Parkdale school?

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

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

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

As I have previously indicated in this House, it's the Public Schools Branch that

determines what their capital priorities are in any given year, and I'm very happy to indicate again that in our Capital Budget this year we've increased capital spending over the next five years on Prince Edward Island schools by the amount of \$500,000 to a total of \$2 million –

**Mr. R. Brown:** Ah great, now that's action.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – to help the Public Schools Branch and the French Language School Board address those issues, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**List of priorities for school infrastructure**

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

Sometimes it's frustrating being here in the official opposition. When we're asking questions, the minister of education has the priority list right in front of him on his desk. He did last night in Capital Budgets. Will you please show us the list, be open and transparent?

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Will you show us the list?

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

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

As I've indicated, there are different priorities lists depending on whether we're talking about the Public Schools Branch or the French Language School Board –

**Mr. Fox:** And if there's an election or not.

**Mr. J. Brown:** It's our job to take those and look at them –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) by-election priority list and an after the by-election priority list.



**Mr. J. Brown:** – and determine what needs to be done within those lists –

**Mr. Myers:** One has stuff in it (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** – and it's their jobs to prioritize, and that occurs on an ongoing basis, so we are happy to do what we can to work with those two organizations to address the capital issues that they have –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** – within their purview.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

### **Boiler replacement at Parkdale school**

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

Question to the education minister: Where on the capital priority list is the boiler replacement at Parkdale school?

**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'll reiterate again that in addition to the new construction that we have planned over the five-year time horizon, we have increased the budget for capital repairs to the tune of \$2 million a year for the next five years for a total of \$10 million in capital repairs to Prince Edward Island schools –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** – and we're very proud of that –

**Mr. Myers:** But we won't tell you where they are –

**Mr. J. Brown:** – and that's not to say that's going to solve every issue –

**Mr. Myers:** – because it's not your money. Oh wait.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – in Prince Edward Island schools over the next five years, but we're prepared to work with the Public Schools Branch and the French Language School Board –

**Mr. MacKay:** Just not with the public.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – to make sure that we do our level best to address the issues that exist.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

### **Sherwood school replacement**

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

I'm glad to hear you're going to work with the French Language School Board and that you're going to work with the unelected Public Schools Branch. We want the public to have some input here.

When I was at the Cody Banks Arena last weekend for the early-bird tournament, I mean the parents that I talked to assume that the new school would be in 2019. Why was your announcement so unclear?

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

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I didn't hear the middle part of that question.

**Mr. Trivers:** It was your announcement that was unclear.

**Speaker:** Okay, yeah, would you repeat the question, hon. member?

**Mr. Trivers:** Certainly. Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Speak slow.

**Mr. Trivers:** When I talk to parents, when I am out talking to the public, listening to the

people of Prince Edward Island, they're telling me that when you announced the new school in Sherwood, it made it sound like it was going to be ready in 2019.

Why was your announcement – your communication with the people of Prince Edward Island – so unclear?

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

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

**Mr. Myers:** It wasn't convenient to be clear.

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

I wish to advise this House that I am quite certain that I never advised that the school would be ready for occupation in 2019 –

**Mr. Myers:** Nor did you advise it wouldn't be.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – and that's not anything that I ever would have thought was to be the case.

We are well aware, and I indicated to the hon. Leader of the Opposition yesterday in Capital Estimates, that new construction takes significantly longer than an addition to or a renovation of an existing building, and so we have been well aware all along that to do this properly will take roughly somewhere in the envelope of three to five years, and we're committed to –

**Mr. Fox:** Three to five years, no.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – doing it properly and working with the community in Sherwood to ensure that they have the best –

**Mr. Myers:** Take that shovel out of his hand right now.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – resource that they can possibly have within the money that we have to put towards it.

**Mr. Myers:** He can't stop digging his hole.

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

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

### School upgrades

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

We'd like to know where on the capital list the elevator upgrade is at Colonel Gray; the roof replacement at Colonel Gray High School, you know there's a roof replacement needed at the Charlottetown Rural High School.

Not only is the minister of education not being open and transparent with the priority list for capital improvements, but he, the minister of transportation, the Minister of Finance, the Premier, and indeed this whole Liberal government is trying to buy votes in a District 11 Charlottetown-Parkdale by-election by announcing a project that won't start for three years and won't be completed for at least five years.

A question for the minister of education, and possibly the Premier, whoever really wants to answer it over there, because you're all responsible: Why are you misleading the voters in the District 11 Charlottetown-Parkdale by-election?

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

**Speaker:** Hon. member, I want to warn you that's bordering, very close to unparliamentary language.

**Ms. Biggar:** Yes.

**Speaker:** Misleading. It's very close.

**Mr. Roach:** Shame.

**Mr. Trivers:** Apologies, Speaker.

**Mr. Myers:** You can't (Indistinct)

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

**Mr. Myers:** That's feigned anger. I recognize that.

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

I would like to kind of address that issue, and we've heard from this opposition on one day that we're spending too much to do capital repairs, and then the next day they're looking for a list as long as my arm of capital repairs.

**Mr. Myers:** Is it that long?

**Mr. Trivers:** We don't even know (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** So we really need to determine (Indistinct) and as I indicated previously, we are moving forward very aggressively to address a \$60 million capital improvement plan with our schools over the next five years. Sherwood school, as I've indicated, we're moving very aggressively into the planning process for that –

**Mr. Myers:** You won't make it to February in this job.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – and we are starting that right away. It takes time to do these things right, and that's something that I think the opposition needs to reflect upon, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**An Hon. Member:** You can't (Indistinct)

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

**Mr. Roach:** Good investment

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** It takes a lot of time to be this crooked.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) in Kensington.

**Mr. Roach:** Good investment for our youth and students.

**Speaker:** Order! Okay, let's have some order, members.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

### **Collaborative discourse among parties**

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

During recent debates, government has spoken several times about wanting to work in a more collaborative manner in this House, and I agree wholeheartedly of course with this intention, but I fear that there is some confusion over what exactly that means, in particular when it comes to the roles of the roles of the government and opposition.

A question to the Premier: Could the Premier please explain what he would like us in opposition to do to achieve this more collaborative discourse?

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

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Mr. Myers:** Be a good student and listen, I would say.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, one of the contexts in which we've been talking about collaboration is collaboration with the community, and we've talked about creating a housing supply taskforce for example, recognizing that there are people and organizations out in the community that do excellent work, that have knowledge of the context, that have to relate to the work that's being done in poverty reduction, and it indeed relates to the work that's being done in education.

We've got our three advisory councils with whom they have approximately 200 people throughout Prince Edward Island who bring experience, they bring insight, they bring connection to community, and those are examples of what we're doing in collaboration.

I'm not sure if the opposition had a particular context, we might be able to help, but we're certainly here to work together.

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.

I'll supply some context, Mr. Premier.

On May 30<sup>th</sup> of this year, the Member from Morell-Mermaid and myself sent a joint letter to the chair of the Special Committee on Democratic Renewal, now the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, requesting further collaborative discussions on several outstanding issues on the committee's mandate, including campaign finance reform. We never received a response.

**Campaign finance reform (further)**

A question to the Premier: Why did we not receive a response to our collaborative attempt to reinstate this committee's discourse?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I won't speak for the chair of the committee, but on campaign finance reform I'm quite prepared to say that I wrote to the Leader of the Third Party and the then acting leader of the official opposition in December of last year and invited a comment back and engagement, but it became clear that given what I had heard from the then interim leader of the official opposition – that there was a leadership process underway – that there was great merit in waiting until there was permanent leader of the opposition, at which point, the leaders can have some discussion about where we go with campaign finance reform and I look forward to that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** Very good (Indistinct)

**Mr. Trivers:** Less talk and more action.

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

**Collaborative discourse among parties (further)**

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

I'll be tabling the letter I just referred to later today.

Easily the best example of collaborative work in this Assembly, since I've been here anyway, is the work of that Special Committee on Democratic Renewal. I think all members would agree with that statement. Before government shut it down, we worked by consensus. No one party dominated the proceedings and it was kept, to a large extent, non-partisan.

Several of the issues on which we still require collaborative discussion; campaign finance reform; MLA severance; increasing diversity in this House. All of those things are within this committee's mandate.

A question to the Premier: If this government is so committed to cooperative discourse, why will it not allow this collaborative committee to complete its important work?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not in a position to speak for the committee, but let me speak on the point of collaboration. That committee brought to this House a report with recommendations that were adopted unanimously by this House to conduct a plebiscite, along the lines that it was done precisely as recommended by the committee. It was very clear to the understanding of all of the members of this House – all 27 of use – that that plebiscite would be non-binding. I can think of one particular member that, as of 8:00 p.m. on the night of the plebiscite, changed his tune.

**Ms. Biggar:** Yes.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** So, Mr. Speaker, if we're going to have collaboration, we have to stick to the things that we agree to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Yes.

**Mr. Roach:** There you go; collaboration. The truth hurts.

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know I have a question today. I've got it on my finger.

I have a question to the minister of education.

Before I start, I want to say that I've been out talking to the people of Prince Edward Island and in my community and surrounding communities, and what the people of Prince Edward Island are telling me that this government is doing a great job when it comes to education, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Roof replacement at St. Jean school**

**Mr. R. Brown:** I was right impressed by the \$10 million that was put into the Budget for school repairs and I know during the public consultations last year around Prince Edward Island the request from St. Jean's came up for the replacement of the roof and the boiler at St. Jean's school, which is a priority to them.

Can the minister assure me that these are going to be on the list also, or how do they get on the list?

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

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

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

Thank you, hon. Member for the question. This is something that I have been engaged with over the course of time. I do know that it's a very important issue to St. Jean school and I do know that, as other hon. Members have indicated, it's been an issue that's been ongoing for some time at this point in time.

In that context, I do know that the Public Schools Branch is very well aware of it and that's it's a high priority for them and I expect that it will be dealt with in the very near future.

Thank you.

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

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

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

We've seen over the last couple of years that the population on Prince Edward Island has been increasing at a phenomenal rate. This is good for our community and good for our economy, Mr. Speaker.

Can the minister assure me that population growth needs schools and needs good schools? Especially when the city schools were given to the – the city schools were built by the City of Charlottetown and passed over to the government of Prince Edward Island in the early 60s.

Can the minister assure me that if the population – and I know the population is going to grow faster than we are predicting – that funding will be available to improve these schools for the many new students that will be coming to those schools?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Longer arm.

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

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

Thank you very much, hon. Member, for the question. As I've indicated, we have what we feel is a very aggressive \$60 million school construction plan that is underway as soon as we can get this Capital Budget passed and we will continue to address the issues that are coming out of those schools – including the Charlottetown schools.

We do recognize that many of our schools are getting to the point where we are going to need to be looking at Capital investment in them and we will continue to be creative and to do the absolute best that we can to address those issues and to provide the best learning that we can provide to Prince Edward Islanders every day.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** He answered all my questions, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Myers:** Oh boy.

**Mr. MacEwen:** The tone changed, didn't it?

**Mr. Trivers:** Is there even a school in your district?

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

**Mr. Myers:** Here we go.

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

My question is also to the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture –

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh.

**An Hon. Member:** Back on the ropes (Indistinct)

**Mr. Perry:** – but a different facet of his responsibilities.

Music is a way of life on Prince Edward Island. In homes every weekend, you'll find friends and neighbors gathering in kitchens playing instruments, singing, and even dancing. Music icons like Gene MacLellan, Haywire, and of course Stompin' Tom Connors all hail from Prince Edward Island and are known around the country and beyond.

New artists like Meaghan Blanchard, Ten Strings and a Goat Skin, and Vishtèn are touring and getting more and more fans. We have so much talent to be proud of here on Prince Edward Island.

Will the minister consider creating the PEI music hall of fame to recognize our many, many talented Islanders?

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

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Now there's a good idea that should be (Indistinct)

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

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

Thank you, hon. Member. That is a great idea and very worthy of consideration. It's something that – I'm not sure whether that came up during the consultations for the cultural strategy or not, but definitely something that I'll definitely take back and have a look at.

I think it's worth noting in saying that that we have had some very innovative ways of putting that kind of thing forward here on Prince Edward Island, including with Atlantic Blue – done by Tara MacLean and Catherine MacLellan had a tribute to her father there this summer – both of which were tremendously successful and celebrate Prince Edward Island and Atlantic Canadian artists.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great.

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

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

We all know that our culture attracts visitors from around the world to our Island. In my district, the new Stompin' Tom Centre has been a huge success with locals and with visitors. Everyone who visits the centre can enjoy local music, theatre, food and learn more about Stompin' Tom. Stompin' Tom continues to be recognized right across our country. This month he received a star on the Canada's Walk of Fame.

Given the success of the new centre and the musical legacy of Stompin' Tom Connors, will the minister consider locating the PEI music hall of fame in Skinners Pond?

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

**An Hon. Member:** Is a museum not enough for you?

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

**An Hon. Member:** Good rural development.

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

That's not a bad idea either. Certainly it's not something that I'm prepared to commit to here today, but –

**Mr. Myers:** There's a by-election; however.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – as I indicated, we're seeing tremendous momentum in the cultural sector and particularly in relation to music on Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker, and that's stemming out of things like the Festival of Small Halls and other great events that are running across Prince Edward Island that drive a great collaborative interaction between our economic development and tourism department and sectors and our department. We look to continue to collaborate with them to do what we can to build that and I think a hall of fame would be a great way to commemorate that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I want to thank the minister for that and for the interest. Will you commit today that you will build a new PEI music hall of fame in Skinners Pond?

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

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Okay, okay.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't normally take a question directed to the minister of education, but I had the opportunity yesterday in thanking the Prime

Minister for the Symon's Lecture to make reference to Stompin' Tom's famous ballad, *Stompin' Ground* where it goes: I've travelled from east to west and I get asked: what's the place I like best. He says: My answer to that is, my stompin' grounds are where the people are the friendliest.

So, maybe we can find some way to have a music hall of fame all across Prince Edward Island where the people are the friendliest.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Lawyer added to e-gaming defense team**

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

Question to the Premier: Why has government recently scrambled and added Rob Ford's lawyer to your e-gaming defense team?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** I'd have to ask to hear that question again, Mr. Speaker. I don't (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** Would you repeat the question?

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

The question is: Why have you scrambled and suddenly added Rob Ford's lawyer to your e-gaming defense team?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** I have to say, that's not something that as minister of justice I would normally, and in this case, don't have a hand in. These matters are dealt with by the professionals and by the legal services people in the department of justice. There are good reasons why the minister wouldn't be involved in making those decisions, so I'll have to go back and see if I

could find out a bit more if the member is interested to know about it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

So, for those of you who recall, back in 2012 Robyn Doolittle wrote a book called *Crazy Town* and in the book *Crazy Town*, she referenced all through the book Gavin Tighe, who is the lawyer that the Premier has recently brought on the e-gaming file.

Premier: When did you agree to bring the *Crazy Town* lawyer to Charlottetown?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, the department of justice is organized so there is a legal services team with a director and in turn, would report to a deputy minister and when something is involved in a litigation, I'm sure they determine what resources or what professional expertise, would be required to defend the taxpayer and to look out for whatever the interest is. I'm sure that's what has taken place in this case.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great job.

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

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

You bring up a very good point about these defense teams that coordinate your defense on files, and it's something that perked something in my head because Liberal spokesperson, Spencer Campbell, recently showed up on a paper in the courtroom that he's now involved in coordinating the defense for the e-gaming.

### **Spencer Campbell coordinating e-gaming defense**

Question to the Premier: Why have you never publicly admit it that Liberal spokesperson, Spencer Campbell, is helping coordinate your e-gaming defense?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, it's not unusual with matters that come into the courts, where the government is either a plaintiff or defendant, to reach outside to outside counsel. We've got a great team in-house at legal services. They're actively involved and if they have determined that it's appropriate to engage outside counsel, they would choose people who have the expertise to represent the interest of Prince Edward Island and –

**Mr. Fox:** For your interest.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – Prince Edward Island taxpayers effectively, and I'm sure that's what they've done in this case.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

The Toronto media has referred to Gavin Tighe as: The best legal hot shot money can buy these days.

### **Rates charged to taxpayers for *Crazy Town* lawyer**

Question to the Premier: What was the retainer to bring Rob Ford's *Crazy Town* lawyer into Charlottetown and what hourly rate is he charging Island taxpayers?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, that is certainly not something that I would have at my fingertips, and to tell you the truth, the



whole line of questioning is taking us into an area that is normally, and should be, dealt with professionally through the legal services and whatever counsel they engage.

I'm sure that that's what's happening. I'm confident that's what's happening in this case, but I'm quite prepared if members want to ask questions about something of that detail that I can take back and bring responses to the floor of the House, I'd be happy to do that, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

The Premier is absolutely right. This is the type of information that would be dealt with in a courtroom, but you refuse to file a defense on the claims so it can't be heard in the courtroom, but we'll hear it here instead.

The Premier and the Liberal Party have brought in the big guns and Island taxpayers are paying for it. Gavin Tighe has presented to groups including the Canadian Corporate Counsel Association on the records retention and investigation into deliberate deletion of emails by government staff.

Question to the Premier: Is this what drew you to Rob Ford's *Crazy Town* lawyer?

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

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

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

I think it's important and I want to remind everyone in here and certainly at this side, that this government is representing the people of Prince Edward Island.

Here we have a group who've, yet again, filed another frivolous lawsuit against the Province of Prince Edward Island.

I would like to remind the member across the floor that the court in PEI has already tossed out a previous similar lawsuit.

At that time, and I'm going to quote the court at that time, what they call the statement of claim. The court said: it's –

**Mr. Fox:** Forty seconds.

**Mr. Roach:** – a long rambling narrative –

**Mr. Myers:** Talk about rambling.

**Mr. Roach:** – replete with irrelevant and immaterial facts; evidence, opinion, argument and speculation.

We side with the people in Prince Edward Island on this particular event.

Thank you.

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

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

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

It's funny to hear the minister read from a court case, which has an auditor's report come after it that proved what you said wasn't even the case. The Auditor General basically said you lied to, and it was proven in the (Indistinct)

If you look at that defense that you guys filed and you look at the auditor's report you'll see glaring, glaring differences.

You know that and that's why the Premier won't file his defense. That's why he brought the *Crazy Town* lawyer to Charlottetown to help defend them. Gavin Tighe, \$1000-an-hour lawyer from downtown Toronto is here in Charlottetown helping this Premier because he got us in a jam because the defense you filed last time was proved to be wrong by the Auditor General and you don't know what to do and you're scared to death.

Question to the Premier: On whose advice did you bring the *Crazy Town* lawyer to Charlottetown?

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

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

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

You know, based on what the court had said last time with the lawsuit and the individuals that were involved in the lawsuit, I think that we can probably expect the same that took place last time.

We are always here to –

**Mr. Myers:** File it and let's find out then.

**Mr. Roach:** – protect the taxpayers –

**Mr. Myers:** File it.

**Mr. Roach:** – to protect the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island –

**Mr. Fox:** If you want to protect them (Indistinct)

**Mr. Roach:** – and we will continue to do so in the future, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

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

If this government is so confident in what the finance minister said; if this government is so confident that they can get this case thrown out again, I don't know why they've waited, what? Ten months now, to file a defense.

They have completely refused to file a defense for 10 months. And, on top of that, coming on the last days where they basically have to file a defense they go to Toronto, they get a hot-shot lawyer that defended Rob Ford, \$1,000-an-hour lawyer and they cart him into Charlottetown to try to save them.

**Files worked on by *Crazy Town* lawyer**

Question to the Premier: Is Rob Ford's lawyer working with the province on any other files or has he been promised any work from this government in the future?

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

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

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

I note that throughout the questioning by the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, he refers, on many occasions, to the different organizations; to the Auditor General, to legal counsel, to various departments and to processes that are in place.

The courts are in place for a reason. The Auditor General is in place for a reason. All these people are there for a reason. There is a proper process to follow. This government has been engaged in that proper process to follow and we will continue to do that and will be there for the best interests of Island taxpayers. We'll always be there to protect the Island taxpayers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

[End of Question Period]