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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

TUESDAY, 12 DECEMBER 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.

Islanders expect that the Premier and government will stand up for them on issues that impact our province.

Premier Campbell was prepared to rock the cradle with the first Trudeau government over the development plan. The late premier Ghiz went head-to-head with the Mulrone government over the fixed link and Slemon Park. Premier Binns wasn't afraid to mix it up with Chretien's government over cuts to health transfers and Employment Insurance.

Proposed federal tax changes

Question to the Premier: Why are you so reluctant to assert our gift of jurisdiction when it comes to standing up for Island small businesses over the proposed federal tax changes?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I wrote directly to Finance Minister Morneau in late September and wrote to the Chambers of Commerce earlier in the month. In fact, that letter was also relayed to the federal government expressing direct concern. In particular, the issue that we underlined in that correspondence had to do with succession of farming and fishing businesses where they're passing within the family.

I'm pleased to say, and we met with the first ministers in October, that the federal government indeed changed that policy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

We're certainly still hearing from a lot of small business operators here on Prince Edward Island that are still extremely concerned about these proposed tax changes by the federal government.

This Premier loves to lecture about our provincial powers, yet, he has not once actually stood up to his Liberal masters in Ottawa. Some examples; lobster carapace size, tuna and halibut quotas, health transfer dollars, marijuana, carbon tax, and, of course, last summer's out-of-service ferry, and now, these upcoming small business tax changes.

Premier again: Why do you always go silent rather than standing up and speaking out on behalf of our province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me remind the Leader of the Opposition that the outcome of the ferry tie-up and the advocacy that was done around that and the collaboration and active advocacy with the federal government was a 20-plus-year solution. The longest that we've ever seen, indeed, to the point where people –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: – throughout Prince Edward Island have the confidence that they can now make decisions and know that they're going to have a ferry service that's reliable for the longest period that's ever been the case and we're happy that that's the case.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald: (Indistinct) eastern PEI (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr. Speaker, the only advocate that seemed to be making any noise here on PEI at all with regards to the out-of-service ferry was the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, every other government across Canada has objected to at least one policy move by this federal government, yet this Premier refuses to speak out in opposition to anything being done by this federal government.

Government refusal to stand up for PEI

Premier: What is behind your refusal to stand up for the people of Prince Edward Island?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it's funny, I was recalling over the weekend the first trip I made to Ottawa after becoming Premier was in one of the worst snowstorms we ever saw, but that was nothing compared – once we did break through that to get to Ottawa and find out that the furniture was pushed up against the door in trying to deal with the Harper government.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, yeah.

Premier MacLauchlan: Since that time, we had a breakthrough on collector roads –

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Premier MacLauchlan: We had a breakthrough on the transmission cables. Mr. Speaker, we have; in the period of three construction seasons, two years working with the federal government, achieved –

Mr. Myers: Great for the MacLauchlan family.

Premier MacLauchlan: – \$300 million –

Mr. Myers: \$300 million.

Premier MacLauchlan: – in infrastructure investments and we couldn't even get them to answer the door of the phone before.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: Liberal times are good times.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Tax changes for small businesses

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

As we all know, in less than three weeks, Bill Morneau's tax changes for small business will take effect.

Question to the Premier: Has your government received any detailed information as to which changes are going forward since the last public comment by the federal finance minister?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, our Minister of Finance was in Ottawa yesterday and on Sunday evening for meetings and I expect that likely was discussed and he will be happy when he's back to offer some detail on that. But I can assure the House that our concerns were relayed and those were reflected in the changes that have already been announced – including the reduced taxes across the board for small businesses. Mr. Speaker, we will get further detail from the Minister of Finance.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

In the face of significant backlash across this country to these proposed small business tax changes, the federal government said it

would revisit some of the more controversial and impactful changes.

Question to the Premier: Why do both levels of government expect business owners to adapt to these changes in less than three weeks?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me say: I think we can all acknowledge, and I certainly will, that one of the lessons from the changes to the taxation on small businesses or private corporations – better called – is that it takes some runway and, indeed, there is a period of working together with the productive sector and with the business community and I believe that the federal government would acknowledge that and I certainly would. Over this period, there have been some changes. There have been some back and forth and as we consider what we learn as a government, which is really my responsibility from that, I believe it is necessary to be in full engagement and to give an opportunity for the business community to adjust to changes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Commitment of support in delay of tax changes

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

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business feels, and has stated publically, that the current timetable is far too rushed. Less than three weeks is not enough time for small businesses to get prepared for these changes. In fact, the CFIB has written all provinces urging them to call on the federal government to delay bringing in these changes until January the 1st, 2019.

Question to the Premier: Will you stand with our small business community and commit your support to delaying these changes?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that I wrote, in late September, to the minister of finance and at that time, I expressed concern about the clarity and understanding of the changes and of the tax regime and of the impact that that can have on the business environment or on the ability to grow.

In particular, I said: any confusion or unintended consequences of the changes could have a significant dampening effect on the future growth of our economy. I believe, that there has been a great deal of clarity and a great deal of stepping back from the measures that were on the table at that time and, in fact, I did at that time ask and suggest that more time be taken.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Few issues resonate with Islanders more than protecting our water and our land resources. Moving ahead with the *Water Act* is commendable, but the less than cooperative approach to improving it is not.

All-party committee and Water Act regulations (further)

Question to the environment minister: What is your objection to having an all-party legislative committee partner with Islanders to develop the *Water Act* regulations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly I am very proud and pleased with our modern and comprehensive legislation piece on the *Water Act* that is currently on the table being debated under second reading. That act was developed with major consultations with Islanders from tip-to-tip,

all across PEI; from other NGO groups that had a vested interest. We, as a department, went out, talked, listened, continued to work with them on changes over the last –

Mr. LaVie: Answer.

Mr. Mitchell: – few months to get it to what it is today – something that we can move forward with, be proud of, and it'll be protective of our water quantity and quality on PEI.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The *Water Act* itself is really an enabling piece of legislation, where most of the details and rules will be dealt with in the regulations. That's where the meat of this law will be found.

Question to the environment minister: Why wouldn't the collaborative spirit used to develop the water act be continued with the development of the act's all important regulations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Indeed the collaborative approach that we've used to develop the act will continue on as we build the regulations moving forward. We are so pleased with how the act came to be. Just last week in Nova Scotia, other NGO groups were asking the Nova Scotia government to use the same process that Prince Edward Island used for the *Water Act*. It's a leading edge type of consultation as far as something of this nature in Canada, I'd say – in Atlantic Canada for certain. We are very proud of what it is there.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct).

Mr. Mitchell: We will continue to work collaboratively with all Islanders moving forward, as we go across the Island, once again, to build regulations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Preserving of water resources and well contractors

Question to the environment minister: In developing the *Water Act*, did you talk with any of the contractors who drill wells to see what feedback they had on preserving our water resources? And if so, what well contractors?

An Hon. Member: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During our consultations, we had hundreds and hundreds of presentations from all walks of Island life. Certainly, it became very clear that Islanders are very passionate about their water quantities and quality on Prince Edward Island. They want to know where withdrawals are occurring. They want to know who was using it. That is what we committed to. That permitting will be put in place for anything that's over residential use and all of those uses will be put online for all Islanders to see.

Mr. LaVie: Who'd you talk to?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, I would think that the first person that would have been consulted would have been the contractors that drilled the wells to see what their witnessing as these wells go in. Normally, opposition wouldn't press the government for all-party cooperation on developing regulations, but this issue is too important to get wrong. Our water resource belongs to all of us – today, tomorrow, and beyond.

Amount of water used in province annually

Question to the environment minister: Excluding private dwellings, how much water is currently used in the province annually? Litres, gallons, cubic meters, any measurement would be fine.

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Currently, all withdrawals that we are tracking are online for public to see. That was a commitment that we made early on when I became minister and we've continued –

Mr. LaVie: So, you don't know. You don't know.

Mr. Mitchell: – to post all parts of pieces that we can within the department to put them online for all Islanders to see. As we move forward, we will be very cooperative and collaborative with all Islanders to bring forward what we can be proud of for a good, solid piece of regulations to ensure that our water quality/quantity is protected for a long, long time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: That's great.

An Hon. Member: Mr. Google knows.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Sustainable level for annual water use

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the environment minister: What is a sustainable level for water use annually on Prince Edward Island?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One thing that became quite evident and quite clear as we went out to talk to Islanders about it is they feel that water is a basic need that Islanders need to have protected. We agree with that as a department, and we have worked very collaboratively to ensure that we will be able to put permitting in place so that we –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: – know where all water usages, all withdrawals are being held on Prince Edward Island, who is holding them so that it is paints a very clear picture of what water we have, what water is being used what are our recharge levels, so that Islanders can have a very good confidence on our water supply.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Provincial golf course water use in 2017

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question, again, to the environment minister: How much water was used on provincially-owned golf courses in 2017?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't have the specific detail of who is using exactly what water, but I do know that all levels that we are recording are posted online. The hon. member can go on there at any time and get a full picture of what we have in place at the moment, but keeping in mind that as we move forward with the new act and as we move forward with the regulations that we will build over the coming months, it will be a very clear picture of what water we have, what water we are using, and how we will put measures in to protect them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Amount of water pumped for irrigation in 2017

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question, again, to the environment minister: If everything is online I'm curious on this one, how much water was pumped out of Island rivers for irrigation in 2017?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) online too?

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

Mr. Mitchell: Again, Mr. Speaker, all levels that we have basically are recorded and put online, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Scientific research on deep-water wells and conservation

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In 2014, our caucus filled a freedom of information request for all of the scientific research done by government on deep-water wells and water conservation. We were told no such research existed.

Question to the environment minister: How much scientific research has been done by this government since 2014 on deep-water wells and water conservation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently, Dr. Mike van den Heuvel from Canadian Rivers Institute is working with us on some research that will be required, as over the summer seasons all indicate that most of our watershed groups help to take various parts of recordings that we need to have throughout the province. So, a fair

amount of research is going on in PEI in regards to our water uses, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the environment minister: Will you table all of the scientific research commissioned by your department on deep-water wells and water conservation over the last 10 years?

Mr. LaVie: I'm guessing not.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: He will, he will.

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll go back to the department and see if I can get some records of exactly the pieces that are there, and anything that I can table I certainly will provide to this Legislature.

An Hon. Member: There you go.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Irrigation ponds and criteria to determine number of ponds

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, this is why details matter. Islanders are concerned for the water and they deserve to see scientific proof that there will be water for a lifetime there for them and it shouldn't be that hard to find with the legislation put on the floor right now. You'd think this would have all been researched and looked at prior.

Question to the environment minister: How many irrigation ponds were allowed in a specific geographical area? What criteria is used to arrive at that number?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: Good question.

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Within the department we have several of what I'll call water experts that are on staff. They take their work very seriously. They have a really good method of approach when it comes to dealing with their scientific pieces and I know that they have a lot that they are working on. They have a lot that they –

Mr. LaVie: Answer the question.

Mr. Mitchell: – know they will continue working on when regulations get completed. I certainly will, anything that they have available; bring back to this House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Number of irrigation ponds allowed in a five kilometre radius

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Without clear guidance from Islanders, these details will fall between the cracks.

Question to the environment minister: How many irrigation ponds will your closed-door *Water Act* regulations allow within, say, a five kilometre radius of each other?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I had an opportunity to speak on this about two weeks ago, any well that is feeding a pond, an irrigation pond or holding pond, as we move forward with the new act and get it into place, those levels will be recorded. They will be metered and they will

be put online like every other piece of information regarding wells on Prince Edward Island over the level of five gallons per minute.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Moratorium on high-capacity wells

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One clear, direct question for the environment minister: Can the minister think of any reason why the moratorium on high-capacity wells wouldn't be continued when your Cabinet goes behind closed doors to finalize the *Water Act* regulations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was going across Prince Edward Island having these collaborative talks with Islanders, I indicated then as I indicated just last week on the floor of the Legislature: The moratorium on agricultural high-capacity wells will remain in place. Until such time, there's more science, more research is completed, and that will be some months down the road.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Sustainable transportation systems

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

Right now, rural Islanders have a larger carbon footprint than urban dwellers, principally due to our use of fossil fuels for transportation and commuting. Indeed, on Prince Edward Island over 40% of our total greenhouse gas emissions come from

transportation. In our increasingly environmentally-conscious society, electric vehicles would give rural development a boost by making rural life much more sustainable.

A question to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: What is your department doing to encourage sustainable transportation systems specifically in rural Prince Edward Island?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As was noted, transportation makes up 42% of our greenhouse gas emissions on Prince Edward Island. What we are doing is we actually, as part of our energy strategy, put together a transportation committee to review transportation across Prince Edward Island. We're working with the automobile industry. We are working with our climate change strategy with the other minister's department –

Mr. Trivers: What does that mean? Lots of talk.

Ms. Biggar: – and continuing to review those opportunities.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Federal funding for electric vehicle charging infrastructure

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

One of the factors needed to encourage the adoption of electric vehicles is effective and widespread charging infrastructure. We're not bad on that front. We could be better, but we're not bad. But, if we're going to transition to electric vehicles on a large scale, we're going to need to significantly expand this charging infrastructure. There were federal funds available for this last

year, but Prince Edward Island did not apply for them.

Question to the minister: Why did your department not access this federal money, and will you be applying in the next round for funding?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Well actually, Mr. Speaker, we did apply for that. I would like to correct the member, and we are continuing to work at opportunities to get funding for our infrastructure. But, I would like to point out that we are doing a lot around our transit.

We have invested in 10 new buses in Charlottetown. We recently invested –

Mr. Myers: Worked great for Cardigan.

Ms. Biggar: – Transportation West.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: We've invested in the County Line Transportation system between Charlottetown and Summerside.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: We've invested in Pat and the Elephant for transportation, and we will continue to look at funding opportunities to increase and improve our infrastructure around charging stations across Prince Edward Island.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Maybe somebody from your department should have a phone call with the people in New Brunswick because they accessed half a million dollars in order to put charging stations all the way along the Trans-Canada Highway in New Brunswick, so you may have applied but clearly you are unsuccessful –

Some Hon. Members: Oh! Oh!

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – with a combination of our world leading wind energy, our small size and therefore limited commuting distances, PEI is better suited than almost any other jurisdiction to make the transition to electric vehicles. All we need is the political courage to set ambitious long-term goals.

PEI commitment to phase out fossil fuels

Will this government commit to a long-term goal of making Prince Edward Island the first province to completely phase out fossil fuels in transportation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that New Brunswick has moved towards electrifying for charging stations. Again, I will point out that we have, and are, applying for funding in order to do that

In order to have electric vehicles on Prince Edward Island you have to be able to leave the Island, as well. It's important that other provinces also are electrified.

We are continuing, as part of our –

Mr. LaVie: Make sure you have the cash.

Ms. Biggar: – energy strategy to develop programs that will increase infrastructure across Prince Edward Island.

We had a great conversation and an opportunity, I'm hoping in the future, I reached out to the renewable energy group that's here today. They reached out to me, as minister, to meet with them. We did reach out to them to set-up a meeting, but we haven't heard back from them, yet. I look forward to that meeting.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning: Minister, many students incur huge financial debt while trying to obtain their education. In order to lessen the burden, many rely on bursaries and scholarships.

Qualifications for George Coles Bursary

Minister: Can you tell me the qualifications that are required to receive the George Coles Bursary?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you, hon. member.

Hon. member, the –

Mr. Myers: If you go by –

Mr. Gallant: – some of the bursaries that are available for post-secondary universities and institutions are the George Coles Bursary. University students are entitled to \$2,200 and Collège de L'île and Holland College are entitled to anywhere from \$1,200 to \$2,200. Students must be PEI residents and attending fulltime tuition at these institutions.

Under the current rules, students are ineligible for the George Coles if they are receiving financial support, such as Employment Insurance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister just mentioned that if a student is receiving EI they're not eligible to receive the George Coles Bursary.

Removing restriction on bursary

I believe this bursary should be available for every student as it was designed.

Mr. LaVie: Oh!

Mr. Perry: Minister: Would your department consider removing this restriction?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you –

Mr. LaVie: Robbing the students again.

Mr. Gallant: – Mr. Speaker –

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

Mr. Gallant: Yes, this is correct hon. member. Students accessing Career Connect programs currently are ineligible for the George Coles Bursary –

Mr. LaVie: Shame!

Mr. Gallant: – they were informed –

Mr. LaVie: Shame!

Mr. Gallant: – whenever they applied for Career Connect. However, I agree with the Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that all first-year students should be equally eligible for the George Cole Bursary. These eligibility requirements are being looked at as we speak.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, minister for having your department look into that.

I do understand that there is a process to having this decision made. Will you commit today that you and your department will make these changes as soon as possible?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, my department, as I indicated, are working on this right now. I do commit that

we will work to change so Island students are eligible for this if they have a source of income.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Last year there was four pieces of legislation that were brought through this Legislature that protected children here on Prince Edward Island. I think that was one of the best sessions I have ever seen in the Legislature in the cooperation there.

One of the decisions of those questions and pieces of legislation that was brought through last year was the child's lawyer. I've had a number of concerns from residents, some of my residents, in terms of the child lawyer and I referred them to the child lawyer and I'm getting good responses back.

Update on children's lawyer

I'd like for the Premier to update this House on what is the child lawyer doing, and how good is it going?

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) used (Indistinct) questions

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Not even a question.

Ms. Compton: Too cute (Indistinct)

Speaker: Okay, hon. members, there was a question asked by the hon. member –

Mr. Trivers: Sort of.

Speaker: – and I think, I believe, the Premier is prepared to answer the question. If you want to listen to him just remember, and I'll briefly mention about interrupting anybody when they're answering a question. Try and hear him out.

The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question.

I'm happy to tell the hon. member and the House that, since the children's lawyer started in her work, and it was a very success appointment, there have been 45 referrals to her by members or others in the public. That she would currently have on the order of 12 active files and another 12 or so under consideration.

The main thing to understand about the children's lawyer is that she is a frontline worker. She is giving on-the-ground service with direct advocacy in court. That's her job; to help with investigations or with clinical advocacy. I believe she is doing a very good job, Mr. Speaker.

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.

That's great news: 45 children are being serviced under the child lawyer. Forty-five children are being protected under the child lawyer and I think that's great. It looks like the child lawyer is working extremely hard.

Mr. Premier: If the child lawyer needs some more resources, will the resources be there for the child lawyer in order to expand and help more children on Prince Edward Island?

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me first say that the children's lawyer works together with other parts of the service that is offered to children, who are coming before the courts or otherwise in vulnerable situations, notably with the people in the Family Law center, which is a great team there that's dealing with everything from alternative dispute resolution to assisting people who are – have got support from family members that they're supporting to be getting.

What's really great about the children's lawyer is that she does work in this collaborative environment, at the same time, she is an officer of the court and she is independent. Should it be the case that there's a need for further resources because of the success of this program, those resources will be available.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Selling of beer in supermarket

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the Premier: Can you explain how Kevin Murphy can sell beer inside a supermarket, but your own government can't?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm not really in a very good position to explain that. I'm not the minister responsible for the Liquor Control Commission. I'm sure –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – he would be happy to provide an answer to that question and that may be something that he can help us with.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Kevin Murphy applied for, and has apparently received approval for a microbrewery at a local supermarket.

Fast tracking of microbrewery application

Premier, again: As of December 1st, the

application was not completed, but the site was open on Friday.

Question now to the Premier again: Why was Mr. Murphy's application fast tracked through government so quickly?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I would be prepared to look into that and either I, or the minister responsible for the Liquor Control Commission, could inform the House –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – further –

Mr. LaVie: Oh, you know.

Premier MacLauchlan: – it may be that the situation could be understood more fully than the point that was made.

As far as I know, there was no fast tracking, but we'd be –

Mr. Fox: Had to have been.

Premier MacLauchlan: – happy to come back and let the House know about that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The logos were up at the kiosk prior to any of the paperwork even being considered. As everyone knows, brewing is a multi-step process however this site only contains two small pieces of equipment; two identical fermenters, which is only one step of the brewing process.

Question to the Premier: How is this a licensed microbrewery if it only contains equipment for just one step of the brewing process?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I would be happy to look into this and either I, or another minister, will come back and inform the House. It's obvious that the –

Mr. LaVie: They don't want to answer.

Premier MacLauchlan: – member opposite is a lot better informed on this –

Mr. LaVie: Pass the buck.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and of the brewing process, but we'll be sure that the House is well-informed on it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Microbreweries to brew on site

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So quite often we're more informed over here, so it's nothing irregular today to be more informed. Government regulations require Island microbrewery licence holders to actually brew at their microbrewery location.

Question to the Premier: How was Kevin Murphy approved for a microbrewery licence, inside a grocery store, when he isn't actually brewing a single drop on site?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, when I look into this, one of the first questions I'll have is whether, in fact, there has been an approval granted for the activities that the hon. member is describing, but that will be the first question I'll look into and we may find that he's, perhaps, not as well informed as he thinks he is.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: Oh.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: Lost your clappers.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I think we will find out and we will find out that the Premier always pulls strings for his buddy, Kevin, but back to the questions of today.

This brewing process, it takes several weeks, yet Kevin Murphy has hundreds of cans of beer from his other companies already on the shelves. There's also six taps installed with six different beers which none of which are brewed on site.

Question to the Premier: How can Kevin Murphy be selling beer at a fake microbrewery location that isn't even producing an ounce of beer?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it sounds like the same question, but in any event, what I've said is that I will undertake to look into this and get back to the House with an answer – an answer that will come either from me or from the minister responsible for liquor control commission.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Fast-tracking microbrewery setup

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So it's clear that Kevin was desperate to get his beer on the shelves prior to the holiday rush and this government was all too happy just to fast track that process so he could actually do it, even though the site isn't actually brewing any beer. So even though the site doesn't actually brew any beer that just allowed him to truck all his beer in and put them on the shelves.

Question to the Premier: What do you have to say for your government's process in this?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'll say what I've said in response to the previous questions, but I will say one thing that the member is asking about the government's process – I can assure him that I have had no part in any process that involves this initiative. But, I will go back and look into this and find out what we can and I'm sure the House will be glad to be as well-informed as we can be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Issuing licenses to brew beer on site

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So it's funny now. It wasn't that awful long ago that the Premier stood in this House and he was singing the praises of Kevin and saying he was his neighbor and whatnot. Now, suddenly, he's trying to distance himself from Kevin. The *Liquor Control Act* regulations state: A licence is only issued if the commission is satisfied the premises, equipment, and facilities of the microbrewery are of a high standard.

Question to the Premier: How was the liquor commission satisfied enough to issue a licence when the site does not contain the necessary equipment to actually brew beer?

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I did, indeed, rise and offer congratulations to Kevin Murphy on winning two awards at the chamber of commerce excellence awards and I stand by that, but everyone in this province who's proposing to operate a business that's in a

regulated sector will be expected to comply with the law and that's exactly what I'll be looking into, as I said, when I look into this and we have some information to bring back to the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So earlier in this session it was the Premier that was singing the praises of Kevin Murphy. He called him a business leader and he talked about his generosity. Just like the Premier and his \$25,000 tax receipt gift that comes from out of his salary, Kevin also uses taxpayer's money to fuel his generosity.

Question to the Premier: Why do rules never apply to your friends?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I think you'll probably find various points in the records of this House when I refer to the rule of law, and by that we mean that the law applies to everyone equally and, indeed, that's our job as government, is to ensure that that is the case. It's also a role that I don't mind playing, that when a citizen is maligned in this House to stand up and speak up for him.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

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

Suspending of license or enforce law

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government continually picks winners and losers. You only have to look at the front page of *The Guardian* today to see that you guys are basically bathing Kevin Murphy in money. You couldn't throw enough money at Kevin Murphy, and you're

using ACOA to do it. You guys are. You look at the loans. Look at the loans alone, that's on paper that you have given Kevin Murphy.

Question to the Premier: Will you suspend this license or at least enforce the law to make Kevin Murphy actually brew beer on that site?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I said I'll look into this or ask that it be looked into, and that either I or the minister responsible for the liquor control commission will report to the House, and I think that's as much as I could reasonably be expected to say today and we will indeed be acting on that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Level playing field for all local breweries

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over here on this side, we continually hear from Islanders who are disappointed by this government and the way they treat their friends special and everybody else is a second-class citizen. There are many breweries here on Prince Edward Island and we know where they are. They're all over Prince Edward Island, yet the one brewery, the Premier's buddy who he talked about in the House and talked about what a great business person he is and how generous he was; his buddy opens up a brewery, a fake brewery in a super market here in Charlottetown to sell beer that none of the other people can do that; none of the other breweries can do that.

Question to the Premier: Once and for all, will you level the playing field and let every brewer on Prince Edward Island have the same opportunity that your buddy Kevin has?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the development in the whole brewing sector, I'll call it, in this province whether it's in Moth Lane Brewer or the newly-opened Copper Bottom Brewery in Montague, or Barnone Brewery in Rose Valley and many points in between. I know there are others that are – I hear, not because they're my friends or because I'm running the liquor control commission, but that this is an area that Prince Edward Islanders are proud to see it and they're patronizing our brewers in this province, and we're proud of that.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: As far as I'm concerned, everybody who has got a business and an initiative and a product to offer to the people of this province and is doing a good job of it, is my friend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]