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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

WEDNESDAY, 5 APRIL 2017

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Core service delivery school teams

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

As part of yesterday's school closure announcement, government committed to creating core service delivery school teams for Island schools.

Question to the education minister: Will these core service delivery school teams be new staff hired, or redeployment of existing staff?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm very pleased yesterday to touch on an initiative that will be presented. Budget will be coming with more well articulated laid out plans and these will be new investments. These are conversations that have been brought forward by the district advisory councils, and probably was the number one priority of the student voice of our district advisory councils.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I think I heard there: New investment.

Addressing mental health issues in our schools is very important. It strengthens the students' health and well-being and supports a positive learning environment.

Question to the education minister: What is the timetable to have these new core service delivery school teams up and running in Island schools?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I would agree with the comment by the Leader of the Opposition that we do recognize and value the importance of social and emotional well-being in Island schools. One of our three pillars in the department is student achievement the second would be social, emotion well-being. The third would be public engagement.

Clearly, this is an investment, which we will elaborate on once the budget is presented. Right now, social, emotional initiatives are part of the school goals that are in all of our 56 English schools across the Province of Prince Edward Island. I look forward to more details and more information as the budget is presented.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

In October, 2014, the education minister was the health minister and he announced the creation of a new core service delivery school teams as part of his government's mental health and addiction strategy in 2014.

Question to the education minister: Is the new core service delivery school team, as you announced yesterday, the same new core service delivery school teams that you announced three years ago, but didn't deliver on?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

If the Leader of the Opposition wants to challenge our track record on health care investments, we'd be more than willing, and my colleague would be more than willing, to talk about the great things that we've done in hospitals across Prince Edward Island.

But moving to my responsibilities, as I indicated, this will be new investments. This will be an initiative that is new to the Province of Prince Edward Island. This is an initiative that will be new to the western and the eastern part of the province, and I look forward to bringing more information to what we feel is a top priority in education on the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, like many Islanders, want to find out a lot more about these new core service teams.

Question for the minister of education: Will these teams be physically be in each school or will they be more of a roving unit from school to school?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

As I shared yesterday, publicly, and there is no secret, at the press conference, that we are committed to an initiative in the western part of the province and the eastern part of the province. More details will come forward, but I was very clear yesterday that we will be looking at the role of nurses; the role of OTs; the role of mental health therapists, which will be new investments by the province, which will be located in schools. I don't have the specifics right now. We'll have to wait for the budget.

I'm very proud of this innovative initiative that takes services right into schools in this province and I believe that this would be an initiative that would be new to, probably, very few provinces in this country.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mental health therapists in schools

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think the minister is being very clear. We have heard a lot of issues with guidance counselors that are travelling from school to school. They're spread across two, three schools and that's a concern that we hear a lot as MLAs.

I spoke with a mental health therapist the other day, and they told me that they used to get about one referral a day. Now they're getting up to a dozen referrals a day. They're extremely understaffed.

Minister: Are these mental health therapists that you announced yesterday, will they be new positions or will they be leaning on already taxed resources?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

As I indicated to questions from the Leader of the Opposition, that this initiative will be presented publicly with details, more specifics, but this will be a new investment.

I want to remind all hon. members of the Legislative Assembly that our government has made substantial investments. Not only on the health care side in physical medicine, we made gains, but also we continued, in the fall, we made an investment of \$1.4 million in school supports to Island children.

We continue to recognize, through the department, that social, emotional and the

needs of Island students is a top priority as we tie our mandate, in the department, with the goals and objectives that are on the ground working with teachers and students in this province.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Creation of new positions for school nurses and youth workers

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know that our resources are already taxed in the system – places like Richmond Centre and also the mental health therapist that I mentioned already. I'm still not hearing the words that these will be new positions created. When you say that these teams are going to include school nurses, youth workers – will these be new positions as well?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

I will say, for the third time, these will be new investments. I will give details to this Assembly and to the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid; this is an initiative that focuses on supports in Island schools. We did communicate that we're looking at an initiative in the west and the eastern part of the province. I can't give specifics right now, but I look forward to hearing what our minister of finance shares on the floor of this assembly. I look forward to continuing to find innovative ways to support Island children in Island classrooms.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've been hearing these words 'new investment', but not specific things for 10 years now. We want to know: What exactly is coming? Will this core service delivery team cut the current three year back log of psych assessment for students?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

As I indicated, I look forward to sharing that information. It would be premature for me to jump ahead of our budget, which the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid knows very well.

I do want to reiterate that as the minister, I'm very mindful of continuing to find ways to support children with needs. I do recognize that we do have waits for psychological assessments, but we do have children that are on that waitlist that are currently getting appropriate and timely and very effective interventions. We are in conversations to look at ways that we can address those wait times and we're doing all we can – working very closely with the Public Schools Branch to make sure we support them and their challenges as we continue to meet the needs of Island children.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another question for the minister: Minister, were you aware of the new school changes that the school board brought forward for the first time Monday night? Were you aware of them ahead of time?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

I've said time after time and I've been very respectful of the work of the Public Schools Branch. We, as a government, have allowed them to go out and listen to over 1,500 written submissions to attend the almost 19 public meetings and to sit in the small group presentations. I'm very respectful of the process. I am very consistent with that message and once those recommendations were presented – some were declined, some were endorsed – I was brought aware of those.

Speaker: The hon. Member –

Mr. Myers: Got it under control.

Speaker: – from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I didn't quite hear an answer there.

Under the Public Schools Branch's own school change policy, it states in section 1.3 that where the board is considering making a school change, the board will ensure that these groups are given fair notice for any such proposed change. They're advised of the decision making process that will be followed, they receive the information they need in order to provide meaningful input, and they're given a reasonable opportunity to make submissions before the board makes a decision on a proposed change.

Minister, when these new school change policies were announced Monday night, it seems to me that that policy right there was broken. Minister: Why did your appointed board not put these new changes through a consultation process?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

I'm a little confused by the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid and obviously he's been paying attention. He's been at the public meetings –

Mr. Myers: You haven't. There you go.

Mr. Currie: The 60 day consultation – we all recognize that this was a very extensive, comprehensive, unprecedented level of conversation on public education. I stand by – and I've been very clear in this Assembly that I support the process.

Let's go back to 2008. We had six public meetings. An elected board recommended to close eight schools and the government of the day closed eight schools. Let's move ahead to the level of conversation –

Mr. Myers: Then you fired the board.

Mr. Currie: – the timelines and the 60 days. I think that all the key stakeholder and the interested parties had all kind of opportunities and did take advantage of that time to consult and to brief the Public Schools Branch.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Consultation process for new policies in school review process

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister is right. Those parties did have a chance to – when the proposed changes were put out there, they had a chance to respond to them, but we have a whole new set of policies that were announced Monday night that people in the public have not had the chance to do exactly what those other people do. You and I both know, a perfect example is out in the Donagh area – the Stratford area. We're splitting groups into two separate junior high schools – brand new policy that came out of nowhere on Monday night. They have not had the chance to be consulted on that policy.

Minister: Will you fix this mistake and start a consultation process for the new policies that were created Monday night?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

We've got an opposition in this house that is sending extremely mixed messages. They were –

Mr. Myers: We want you to follow the rules, that's all (Indistinct) follow the rules (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Order!

Let the minister answer the question.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: We're starting over again.

Mr. Currie: The consultation process has come. The five steps have been implemented. There has been an unprecedented, comprehensive conversation on public education. We will not be going back.

At the end of the day, a decision was made that there will be no closures in the Province of Prince Edward Island by this government and we stand by that. We will not be going back down the road to open up any conversations. The rezoning is in the Charlottetown core area, which goes over into Stratford, which is on the east side of the Trans Canada and I am confident and have the faith in the Public Schools Branch that they have the mandate under their policy to implement the changes and work very closely with schools and families.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think I'm being very clear. There were brand new policies announced Monday night that the parents did not have a chance to – I'll give you an example: There are people rezoned in the Mermaid area back to Donagh. Do you know what? A lot of them are okay with that. They're okay. They've talked to their children about it. They've made that commitment and they're saying: You're going to be in Donagh and then you're going to go to the same junior high as

the one you were always planning on going to.

Brand new policy came out Monday night to say: No. Now you're not going to that junior high. Those parents did not have the chance to be consulted. I'm not calling for a brand new whole 60-day process. I'm talking about real consultation with these parents. They were told: That was it. It's not just around Charlottetown, there's rezoning that's been going on in Annandale, out there. There are also infrastructure suggestions or proposals that I'm sure your government will have consultation on.

Minister: Will you commit for a consultation process of some sort for these brand new policies Monday night?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

If we look back at last spring, there's been a real serious message sent to Islanders and we had discussions in this House and there have been stories in the media. We have some serious issues in respect to overcapacity. I really have to continue to reiterate: The whole process of the school review was to look at how we address the disproportion and distribution of students and how we can better respond to the needs which continue to come from opposition about more and more and more. I recognize that and we have to be diligent. We have to be responsible with the money we have and make sure that we find ways to balance schools as best we can.

Interview with Island Morning

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This Premier here, his broken promises, they rival the rate of Catherine Callbeck's 7.5%.

Premier: Why did you fail to honour your promise you made yesterday and go on Island Morning this morning?

Speaker: Hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I didn't know you were paying that much attention, hon. member.

Mr. Myers: You should know.

Premier MacLauchlan: But, in any event –

Mr. Myers: It's my job; I get paid to do it.

Premier MacLauchlan: It's up to Island Morning to decide who they put on the program. Yesterday, they announced that I'd be on, and this morning I turned on the radio and I heard it was the minister of education, so maybe they were using me as a kind of a loss leader.

In any event, I heard the minister of education, and I thought he did a very good job of representing the process, the outcomes, the engagement throughout the province, and I was very proud of how he got along.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, that's the very first person today who I heard that said the education minister did a good job on the radio this morning, so I've finally heard one person today that finally said that.

Mr. R. Brown: No, we're getting calls (Indistinct)

Hub school model

Mr. Myers: It took all day for someone to say that.

For five years, I've been raising in this House the issue of small schools. I've been ignored by you guys. We've talked about community models, and we've talked about the benefit of the hub model in this school.

Question to the Premier: Why is your government refusing to embrace and

champion the hub model here in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, one thing at a time.

Yesterday, the opposition was wondering why I didn't stop the whole thing 60 days ago. People came along, they took part, they organized as communities, they found new sense of initiative and vision and empowerment, and that may very well be something that matures into something further in the communities, but as of yesterday we addressed what was on the table for Cabinet, which was the two recommendations for closures, and unless the opposition is asking us to reverse that, that's what we did as of yesterday and we're very proud of what those communities have shown in terms of their excitement and interest and enthusiasm and collaboration for their schools.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: Right on.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Perhaps the Premier didn't actually listen to the minister this morning on the radio, who he just gave credit for doing a great job because he threw a dagger into the hub school model and said no, this morning, he said: Absolutely not happening.

Question to the Premier again: Why are you not prepared to treat communities as equal partners in education?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we've come through a 60-day process – 60-plus-day process in which the communities played a very active part and took part in

public meetings, made submissions, took lots of initiative, and we listened to every bit of that and respected it in the decisions that we made yesterday. We've created three councils that involve a total of 200 participants in the district advisory councils, the Learning Partners Advisory Council, and the Principals Council, and that's all about community engagement.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great for the Premier to stand in the House and remind Islanders how many levels of people he's put between the people on the ground and himself, because he doesn't want to deal with the people at all. He doesn't want to have a discussion eyeball-to-eyeball with the people in the community.

The hub school model is a great model for small communities. It brings in economic development and it concentrates it into one area and it makes it a community-centered hub for everything.

Question to the Premier: Why are you failing to see that now, right now, is the perfect time to have a two-way dialogue with communities about having a hub school?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as I recall when we were here last fall and in the spring of last year, the hon. member complained regularly that I'm too involved in the councils, so I guess he'll have to decide which way he likes it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do think you're too involved, and you're using them as a shield to hide from people. That's exactly what I said. If you'd like to rebut that, then go ahead. What I said was that you use these people to hide behind, because you're a hider like we found out yesterday. You like to hide.

A question to the Premier again; Paul MacNeill's column this morning, he said: "A stay of execution only works if both the provincial government and community are prepared to do the heavy lifting now needed. Government must show it is open to community preferences, such as implementing the school hub model."

Question to the Premier: Why did your false commitments to meaningful education conversations last less than 24 hours?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it was very clear in the announcements that we made yesterday and the representatives from the communities of Georgetown and St. Jean were there. Others were paying close attention. People have been involved all the way through this, and everybody that I talk to believes that yesterday is a further step and a new step on an important journey for education in this province, and that's what this has been all about, and it's to work together with communities and with government and with the educators and the students and the three councils to achieve the most we possibly can to have educational excellence in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Reversal of school closures

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I think everybody in this House agrees that not only the quantity, but the quality of

public submissions in the school review process was impressive. However, in today's *The Guardian* editorial, they cynically suggest that government's last-minute decision to reject the recommendations of the Public Schools Branch may have been, and I quote: "a desperate attempt to ensure political survival."

A question to the Premier: Was the decision to reverse the school closures the result of partisan politics or of a government that finally recognizes the importance of citizen engagement?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I hope the media present took note of the comment by the Leader of the Third Party about the cynicism of the editorial writers.

What we decided yesterday as Cabinet, given the recommendations of the trustees of the Public Schools Branch, was what is in the best interest of Prince Edward Island and of the communities and of the schools involved on a go-forward basis as we continue the endeavour to have the best possible school system that we can at every part of this province, and to work together to achieve the most that we can. That was not, as the question implied, some kind of a political calculation, and he can say what he likes about the editorial in *The Guardian*, but we take our public responsibility seriously. We weighed the choices, and we made a decision.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Community engagement in decision-making processes

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

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

Clearly, it was not partisan politics, so I'm happy to hear, therefore, that this government appreciates the value of citizen engagement. I certainly heard loud and clear from Islanders that they're not happy with

the top-down engagement processes that seem to be nothing more than tokenism.

We need to go beyond simply allowing Islanders to speak on issues, and involve them directly in the policy-making process. And, I hope government's reversal on school closures indicates a change in direction, to engage more meaningfully with citizens and communities.

A question to the Premier: What models are you proposing in order to improve the decision-making processes?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me refer first to the claim that was made that our government is not engaging with citizens. We're doing it currently on the Water Act. We've done it on energy. We've done it around municipalities and local government –

An Hon. Member: Electoral reform.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and on numerous other matters, and on schools, let me remind everyone –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) engagement there.

Premier MacLauchlan: – that this concluded, or came to a culmination, on Monday night with recommendations that were dealt with by yesterday, with some complaints from across the floor that we didn't interfere politically in the course of the process after everybody in this House –

Mr. Myers: No, we were saying (Indistinct) leader –

Premier MacLauchlan: After everyone in this House voted for the *Election Act* last year, which we respected and we kept the politics out of it, and I think it's a good idea for Islanders, including people who are involved in government, to take some time to reflect on what that process was, and in particular to work together and move forward.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Reversal of school closures (further)

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

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

Well, given government's unanimous rejection last night of the notion of elected school boards, and of the plebiscite results last fall, I have to wonder whether this government is interested in democratic change or merely bureaucratic change.

Centralization of decision-making authority is being pursued by this government and its predecessors for many decades, and the reversal on school closures suggests that this administration may have finally seen the value of public input.

A question to the Premier: If government is not open to elected school boards, is this Premier open to collaborating with all parties in this House to explore other models of engagement that will devolve decision-making power to citizens and communities?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'll do my best to keep my response to 40 seconds unlike the preamble to the question.

We are all in this House –

Mr. Myers: Give him a Snickers bar (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: We are all in this House –

Mr. Myers: You're not yourself when you're hungry.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and let me remind the hon. member and everyone in this House that in the spring sitting of the last year we deliberated at some length on a new education act, the first one in more than 40 years in this province. We brought forward a new structure on which everyone had an opportunity to consider it, and everyone voted in favour of it. What I would say to the members of this House, and indeed people are doing it out through the province: Respect that input. Respect that engagement and let's give the process a chance to work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Police review report

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Premier. In the last sitting of the House, the Department of Justice and Public Safety announced the completion of the long-awaited police review report that was conducted by Perivale and Taylor. The City of Charlottetown has suggested there has been some information on the report that needs to be corrected.

My question is: Has the full review been completed to the satisfaction of your department, and do you feel there might be room for more work to be done?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, following the production of the report we had feedback from various police partners on that initial work, and indeed who had collaborated actively through the process. We worked in consort with the consultants and police partners to understand the nature of the concerns or the questions that were being raised, and that included a closer look at concerns raised by the Charlottetown Police Services.

As a result, the consultants have prepared a final report that I expect to table in the very near future, and I thank our partners for that work. The recommendations will remain the same, and we'll be working with our police partners and others to implement this work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The police review involved community consultation that was complemented by input from the provincial government, elected officials, police leaders, and operational personnel. It was then shared with the key stakeholders and municipal partners. The consultation was to focus on community safety needs and policing services.

Would the Premier provide the House with specific information on how the police review is being implemented?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, early in the new year I took part – as did other officials – in meetings with municipal leaders, administrators, police frontline people and police leadership, and the upshot or the further work from that is that the CAOs of the municipalities will join with officials in a working group. There will be a further operational working group, and out of that there will be subcommittees of police, government, and union representation who will work together to implement the key recommendations.

The focus of all of that work will really be on two things: Public safety and officer safety.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Based on the report, would the Premier advise how he envisions the day-to-day workings of the various police departments in cooperating to ensure the safety of our Island community?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for the question.

The working group and the subcommittees are soon to be commencing and doing that work. It's envisaged and it was outlined at the first of the year that this would be a

process of about 12 to 18 months, so what government is adopting as an approach is to work with existing police services and resources to move towards Island-wide policing standards and strategies that will be harmonized, and to ensure that there's appropriate oversight and accountability, and to say again, public safety, officer safety, and community safety will be our objectives as we work together over the next 12 to 18 months.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Barbershops not allowed to serve alcohol like spas

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for the Liquor Control Commission.

Some spas in Prince Edward Island are currently serving alcohol, but apparently barbershops can't. Minister: Could you explain to the House why you are unwilling to allow barbershops to serve alcohol in the same way spas do?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, I respect the role of the Liquor Control Commission, and the Liquor Control Commission is in fact the body that decides whether a license get issued or not. It's not the minister.

But, the regulations set out the legal parameters for anybody who wants to apply for a license, and I would certainly encourage any business owners who are considering this to go to the Liquor Control Commission and go to the board and talk to them about their business plan and how to properly go about applying for that, and figure out ways that they can, perhaps, fit within the vast regulations that currently exist.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: You've got him on the ropes.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I understand the problem may be with the laws, the way the law is written. Minister: Will you consider changing the law and/or the regulations in order that licenses may be issued to barbershops?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, we have been looking at the – and are actively – I've asked the leader of the board to look at other provinces, and the member's question is very timely, because it's only recently that I penned a letter to the Liquor Control Commission board, and I've asked them to consider reviewing the entire act.

The act, actually, has not had a thorough review since sometime in the early 1970s, so I think it's an appropriate time and timely to review that act and see if we can streamline it and make it easier for anybody who's trying to get licenses across the province, because right now the act has a lot of addendums and add-ons, so I've asked the board to consider reviewing that act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: About time.

Deleted government emails pertaining to school review process

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

As all of you here in the House would recall last fall in the Legislative Assembly, daily questions were asked with regards to who

deleted emails related to the failed e-gaming scheme.

Question today to the minister of education: Minister, whose emails were deleted concerning the school review process?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Currie: Thank you very much. I'm unaware of any deleted emails regarding the school review process, Mr. Speaker. I'm just a little caught off guard by the question, because it's – I'm unaware of any conversations about deleted emails.

Mr. Myers: You're caught off guard a lot today (Indistinct).

Mr. Currie: Yeah, it's all good.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

The opposition office sent a FOIPP request from our office seeking all emails between the minister and his deputy on the subject of school review. No records were found.

Minister: Who deleted all the emails between yourself and your deputy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Currie: Yeah, I don't have to email my deputy. I mean, basically, there was a decision made that we would support the Public Schools Branch to go out and to begin the process around school review.

I did not have any correspondence or emails with my deputy. I work with her. I don't have any correspondence via email with the directors. I have conversations with the educational leaders in this province, but I would – I'm not surprised that there's no deleted emails.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

Again to the minister of education: Minister, do you honestly expect Islanders to believe that not one single email existed between yourself and your deputy relating to your eight-month school review saga?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Currie: I don't – I talk with my deputy and I sit in standing appointments with her and we review and we discuss when issues arise. I don't do a back and forth email conversation with my deputy. It's not how I work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

The deputy, in her response to our FIOPP request went to great pains in a response and she quoted – or I quote her as: Area searched included the minister's correspondence directory, file cabinets and all emails of the deputy and minister.

If the minister and the deputy minister did not communicate other than meeting face-to-face, why would they actually go to pains to say that they couldn't find any emails when they could have just said: There were no emails. We meet face-to-face.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Currie: Mr. Speaker, I've been in this House for 10 years and this is probably the most interesting line of questions I've had as a minister.

I am not surprised that there is no record of emails. If a FOIPP request comes in my

department officials have to respect that process and go through that. But, I do not correspond with my deputy through emails. I sit and we talk. We have conversations. When issues arise she may phone me, but we are in conversation on a regular basis. I was very supportive of the school review process and I let the process – I let the people do the work and that's why there are no emails.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. –

Mr. R. Brown: He's doing it the old fashioned way.

Speaker: – Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

The deputy actually stated at the school meetings that her and the minister never talked in person.

But, yet now we have the minister saying here in the House today that he doesn't communicate electronically, that he does it face-to-face and in person.

What's true here, minister? Do you actually meet and discuss issues with your deputy minister, or do you email back and forth and delete them the same as you did in the e-gaming?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: Wow (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Where is E.T. –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) got himself caught (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: – where's E.T. next?

Speaker: Order!

The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Currie: Bizarre statement.

I'm responding to this question? Are we still in Question Period here? Okay, thanks.

I'm just really taken aback by these lines of questions. I just think they're – I just think they're well –

Ms. Biggar: Ludicrous.

Mr. Currie: Well, it's just.

At the end of the day I have got a great working relationship with my deputy. Everything is above board. I'm not sure what the Member from Stratford-Kinlock is trying to create some sort conspiracy or brown-envelope-drop-off-at-midnight-behind-the-Shaw Building.

I'm not really sure where he's going with this, but the conversations around school review started. There was a terms of reference. It went out. The public school did the work. Decisions were made and here we are today.

I would be not surprised, at all, that there is no email correspondence between my deputy and I. I prefer a talk on the phone and sit and have conversations. It takes too much time to send emails; typing and so on. I just have conversations just the old fashioned way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

Again, the member across, the minister, states that he is confused about the line of questioning because he's confused whether or not he's actually had face-to-face or direct conversations with the deputy. He says he did, but the deputy has stated, in public meetings, that she didn't have direct conversation with this minister.

So what is it –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) on the phone then.

Mr. Aylward: – deleted emails or is it your deputy is misleading us?

Again, a second FOIPP request was sent asking for emails between the deputy and one of the unelected school directors. Not one single email was found for this request either.

Minister: What happened to these emails?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

There were conversations had prior to the support for the school review. In respect to the role my deputy played as a director, I was very respectful and I'm sure the Member from Stratford-Kinlock knows the deputy. He was a student at Charlottetown Rural. She does her work with the upmost standard and integrity and is a fine person.

We – and I did not put her in the situation to have any conversations on school review. I read the media. I followed the process just like everybody else in the Legislative Assembly, and I paid very close attention. There was never any correspondence through emails or conversations with my deputy.

Thank you.

Through email.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, final question.

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

Both requests were signed-off by the deputy, even though they both involved her emails.

Can the minister –

Mr. Myers: No integrity in that.

Mr. Aylward: – state whether or not he agrees that this would be, alone, be a conflict of interest?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education,
Early –

Mr. Myers: There goes the integrity.

Speaker: – Learning and Culture.

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

Ms. Biggar: No.

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

Our department, like all departments, is very
respectful of FOIPP –

Mr. Myers: No you're (Indistinct)

Mr. Currie: – we are mandated to follow
the process on following through on requests
–

Mr. Myers: No, you didn't.

Mr. Currie: – but I'm not surprised that
there is no email correspondence between
my deputy and I on the school review
because we didn't have any –

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

Mr. Currie: – and I'm very respectful of
my deputy and would never put her in that
situation.

As I say, the school review process
unfolded, decisions were made and we're
turning the process into decisions, into
action, into implementation for next
September.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Currie: One of the craziest lines of
questions I've had in 10 years.

[End of Question Period]