



Session:	2/65
Date:	7 April 2017
No:	46

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

FRIDAY, 7 APRIL 2017

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

E-gaming records destroyed

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

This week we have been discussing amendments to the *Archives and Records Act*. The amendments stem from the Auditor General's report on the e-gaming scandal where records of key government executives were illegally destroyed.

Question to the education minister: How will these changes prevent a repeat of these outrageous actions by senior levels of your Liberal government?

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 excited as the minister to raise the bar in respect to our role as government in response to the Auditor General's report.

We've had good discussion on the floor of the Assembly over the last day in respect to the legislation and we will continue to have more discussion as we continue to debate that legislation.

Our mandate is to continue to raise the accountability and also enforce the compliance and the level of accountability in the work we do in records information management.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Penalties for government officials

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

The minister talks about raising the bar. Electronic and written records on e-gaming for key deputies and Premier's Office staff were destroyed, violating the laws of the record management.

Question to the minister: Why aren't there harsher penalties for senior government officials and executives and elected officials, who violate the law, as has happened in your government's e-gaming scandal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

The Auditor General was very clear and in my time as a Cabinet minister for the past 10 years, we take the work of the Auditor General very seriously. Clearly, she executed and demonstrated a clear direction for our government. Records management does fall under the responsibility of the Provincial Archivist, Jill MacMicken, is doing an outstanding job.

I have all the confidence in that legislation and her work after a very extensive jurisdictional scan, and comparing what this legislation means to Prince Edward Island compared to other jurisdictions, and have full confidence in that legislation and the work under her leadership.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

E-gaming records destroyed (further)

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

What we heard there is nothing about harsher penalties. During a review of this bill it came to light that a group of deputy ministers provided advice on developing these amendments.

Question to the education minister: Did any deputy ministers or senior staff, who had a

hand in the e-gaming scandal, have a hand in developing these same amendments before the House?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I have confidence in the provincial archivist. I think that she has clearly demonstrated her level of commitment; her level of focus and professionalism. I've got confidence that they've done an extensive job to look at provinces and territories and how we will enforce, through stronger legislation, and certainly very proud, as the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, who is responsible for records information management, that we will be one of the top provinces in respect to our compliance and our accountability, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: Never even touched the question.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Leadership of Liberal government

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, last year the Finance minister told the House he consulted the Auditor General on a bill, which he told the Public Accounts Committee that he did not. Clearly this has been proven not to be true.

Premier: Why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe what this tired government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is obviously, otherwise occupied this morning and we'll look forward to hearing what he has got to say when he arrives, but I have terrific

confidence in the Finance minister and his standards and his integrity. I also have a lot of confidence in his leadership in our economic management in this province and we look forward to hearing what he has got to say shortly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, time and time again, members of this government promise Islanders they would not bring HST in. Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

Premier: Why does the Liberal Party kept expecting Islanders to believe what this tired government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we said, in the spring of 2015, that there were no plans to increase the HST and we brought forward measures last fall to do so by 1%. All we heard from the other side is, we're going to bring the economy to halt.

At the end of January, January 31st, 2016 to January 31st, 2017, the Prince Edward Island retail sector increased by 10.8%, which led the country, and the next after that was British Columbia, way behind at 6.6%.

When we hear this Chicken Little talk from the other side it's because they don't understand the economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) wouldn't have to (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Born a rich man and (Indistinct) rich man –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Order, order!

Mr. Myers: You have no idea what people are going through.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque has the floor.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to remind the Premier that it was an election promise in 2008 by his government, HST wouldn't come in and it certainly did. We see what it's at now.

Last year, this Premier campaigned on a promise to restore elected school boards. Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

Premier: Why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islander to believe what this tired government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we came to power, and it was clear here in the spring sitting of 2015, and it was clear to everyone in this House, that we have a dysfunction in our educational system between the school board and the department of education and the need to bring greater clarity and greater citizen engagement to the governance and the leadership and the policy development of education in the province.

We brought an *Education Act* for the first time in 40-plus years that was approved by all sides of this House. That's what we're acting on and it's for the betterment of education and a learner-centred approach in education in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It sounds like another broken promise to me.

This Premier also campaigned on a promise to have smaller Cabinet than his predecessor.

Mr. Myers: Oh.

Mr. MacKay: Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

Premier: Why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe what this tired government says?

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) stacked on top of each other over there.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we did start up with a smaller Cabinet.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) started out.

Premier MacLauchlan: We were eight or perhaps nine the first time. We got up to 10, and we're getting so much great work done that we're now up to 11 and you're going to see the evidence before the day is out of what we're accomplishing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Poor little rich boy – Richie Rich.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to point out we seem to have a theme here of broken promises taking place.

This government promised to remove Liberal Party backbenchers from Cabinet committees.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh.

Mr. MacKay: Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

Premier, why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe what this government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Great question, that's a great question.

Mr. MacEwen: Another one.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we're working together as a team over here. I'm not sure he's right about that point about whatever he called that promise, but in any event we are moving forward with this government. We've been at it two years and we've got a long road ahead of us –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct).

Premier MacLauchlan: – and as we go, we're doing better for Islanders, and that's exactly –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) what the polls say.

Premier MacLauchlan: That's exactly what we promised Islanders. We're going to work together and we're going to keep going forward together, and if the opposition doesn't like that, that's why they're going to stay in opposition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: You're Alex Campbell.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Plebiscite results

Mr. MacKay: Here's another one for you, Premier. You'll love this one.

Mr. Speaker, last year this Premier held a plebiscite whose results were supposed to guide electoral system reform –

Mr. Myers: What happened?

Mr. MacKay: Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

Premier: Why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe what this government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question. They can't be trusted.

Mr. Trivers: Say one thing, do another.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, this has been discussed at length in this House, and it was in the sitting of the fall.

Mr. Myers: He's getting his arms moving, he's angry.

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct).

Premier MacLauchlan: We want to have the true support of Islanders before we make this major decision –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) in a second.

Premier MacLauchlan: And we're also looking forward to finding out what the Conservative Party actually thinks about electoral reform, and maybe be the time you get a leader we'll know more about that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: That's (Indistinct).

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, broken promises – we're losing track how many broken promises we've discussed here already.

Mr. Aylward: I've got seven so far here.

Increased taxes and fees

Mr. MacKay: This Premier campaigned on a promise to not increase a single tax or fee.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh.

Mr. MacKay: Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

Premier, why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe what this tired government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Great question, that's a great question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

An Hon. Member: I wasn't too tired this morning, was I?

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'd be interested to see exactly what the phrasing of that promise was, but I invite the member opposite and I'd like all members of this House to hear what the finance minister has to say before we finish up this morning.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Compton: Magic beans.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Island-wide high-speed Internet

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, more broken promises from many members of this government repeatedly promised Islanders proper high-speed Internet Island-wide.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh.

An Hon. Member: Oh, really?

Mr. MacKay: Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

Mr. Myers: What happened?

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct) to do it?

Mr. MacKay: Premier, why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe what this tired government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it may be the opposition that's getting tired, because they haven't been paying enough attention to the progress that's being made –

Mr. Myers: Because there hasn't been activity.

Premier MacLauchlan: – on connectivity and on broadband delivery in this province, and there was a study released the day before yesterday by the Conference Board of Canada that rates Prince Edward Island near the top of the country for connectivity, and –

Mr. Myers: Tell that to the people who live in the country.

Premier MacLauchlan: – we're doing better –

Mr. Myers: Turning your back on rural Islanders.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and we're doing better, Mr. Speaker, and we intend to keep improving broadband connection throughout this province.

Thank you.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Turning your back on Islanders!

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. LaVie: Eighteen percent.

Replacement manors

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier likes to talk about progress. Here's one that'll fit in there.

Replacement manors in both Tyne Valley and Montague –

Some Hon. Members: Ooh.

Mr. MacKay: – have been promised over and over again –

Mr. Myers: Since 2007.

Mr. MacKay: – by Liberal members. Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

Premier, why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe what this tired government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Great question, that's a great question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, this province has the third-most manor beds per capita of any province in the country. When we –

Mr. LaVie: Looking for the 18%.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) bait and switch.

Premier MacLauchlan: When we do those replacements in Tyne Valley and Montague, we'll be even further ahead, and those are going to get delivered and they're going to get delivered –

Mr. Trivers: We've heard that before.

Premier MacLauchlan: - on terms that are fiscally responsible and where (Indistinct) we're sharing that cost and where the people are going to get the best service that we can give them, and you just wait. It's getting done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: We've waited for 10 years.

An Hon. Member: The APM fund.

Mr. R. Brown: Work, work, work.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, a broken promise – the only person that is excited about these promises is the guy that's making the signs, putting them up in the landing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay: In 2011 and 2015, this government campaigned on a promise to establish a land bank for young farmers. Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

Premier: Why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe what this tired government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Premier MacLauchlan: Finally got a question.

An Hon. Member: Finally got a question.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

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

I thought maybe they had deleted agriculture and fisheries; they never asked a question on it last time. We were up until –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

An Hon. Member: Rural PEI.

Mr. McIsaac: – the last day of the first week here.

Mr. MacEwen: I asked hundreds (Indistinct).

Mr. McIsaac: In the agriculture area, we have developed a lot of great things.

Mr. Myers: In your opinion.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Mr. McIsaac: We're putting 67% of our budget back into the farms.

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct).

Mr. McIsaac: Many programs that are working very well.

We brought in a program similar to the old LDC which just dealt with the land piece, and it was helping for young farmers or older farmers who wanted to transition out. That program is in place right now. It's working very well for those who have taken part of it, and it's going to continue working in doing great things for the farmers of our province.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. J. Brown: You need to start asking about the good work.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, another broken promise – I've just pointed 11 broken promises out and we haven't even started yet; all kinds.

Mr. Myers: Well, there must be more.

Doctor for every Islander

Mr. MacKay: For years, former premier Robert Ghiz promised a doctor for every single Islander.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh.

Mr. MacKay: Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

And, supposedly you have a new government, but there's 14 of your 18 elected officials over there that were under Robert Ghiz.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacKay: Premier, why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe what this tired government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: Broken promises.

Mr. Myers: He's a hider. I told you he's a hider.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I can say that we have – within our department we have a recruiting and retention strategy and we are working hard at recruiting physicians, and in fact we have I think about 246 practicing doctors in the province.

Mr. LaVie: That's working well.

Mr. Henderson: Yes, we have a few vacancies that we're working on, and we continue to take people off the patient registry, and we're seeing that patient registry at lower numbers than we've seen in some time, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) want the old minister back.

An Hon. Member: Must have ran out by now.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

E-gaming scheme

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, another broken promise.

For years, former finance minister Wes Sheridan told this House –

Mr. Myers: Oh, that guy?

Mr. MacKay: – told this House that his government had not hand whatsoever in the e-gaming scheme.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh.

Mr. MacKay: Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

Premier, why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe what this tired government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: Come clean.

Mr. Myers: Wes the Cat had more (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the reason Islanders can believe this government is because they can see the results of what we're achieving.

Mr. LaVie: Eighteen percent.

Premier MacLauchlan: What we're achieving fiscally, what we're achieving economically, what we're achieving in health, education, family and human services, and in delivering good government to Prince Edward Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Give us Robert Ghiz back.

Mr. R. Brown: I think you're better off (Indistinct).

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre

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

Yesterday during Question Period, the Government Whip and the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy stooped to a new low. They prearranged a series of questions designed to blame our province's rape and sexual assault centre, which is an NGO, for shortcomings in the important services that they provide.

Will the minister explain what exactly her and her Government Whip were trying to accomplish with their finger pointing exercise yesterday?

Some Hon. Members: Shame, shame.

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

I have great communications with the rape and sexual assault centre, with Anderson House, with a number of other providers that provide services for women –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) blame them.

Ms. Biggar: - right across Prince Edward Island.

My comments yesterday in regard to questions was in support of the great work that these organizations across PEI do. And if that wants to be misconstrued by the member across the floor of the great support that these organizations give women across PEI, then I think you'd better read the Hansard again with my answer.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

The minister said it's an NGO, it's not within my department. Victims can call 911 or go to the ER. Clearly she did not listen to the brave, heartbreaking personal stories told at the Island Mothers Helping Mothers presentations.

Minister: Why is this how your government treats victims of sexual assault?

Mr. Trivers: Shame, shame.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and the Status of Women.

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, as the member across the floor well knows, I sat in on those meetings and I shared with them and I heard their personal stories and I also appreciate the work that the Island Mothers Helping Mothers does with women across Prince Edward Island. We have a varied list of organizations across PEI that we support through funding, but they are NGOs and

they do great work for women across Prince Edward Island, as does our ER departments, our mental health centres, our police services, our Victim Services, Catholic Family Services Bureau and on, and on, and on – the organizations across PEI that help families and victims of violence.

Mr. J. Brown: The ambulance is going down the street. Why don't you chase that too?

Speaker: Hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

I do agree. This minister sat in on these presentations. She sat beside me, but I don't think she actually listened to these stories. If this minister would only go on to social media today and look at the comments that are coming back from these individuals – these women that poured out their hearts and told their stories at these presentations and the response to the statements made by this minister in the house yesterday.

Mr. LaVie: Shame.

Mr. Aylward: She would quickly realize and go back to her department – go back to her Cabinet table to ensure the services are in place. She talks about the ER. Yes, the ER doctors do a great job, but did she listen to the lady that told the story about being directed to go to the ER and the ER was closed? I don't think she heard that story.

I do applaud the great work of the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre for all they do with the limited resources they have. This government has ignored this issue for 10 long years.

Speaker: Hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, do you have a question?

Mr. Aylward: I do.

Minister: Why is this Liberal government so quick to blame others rather than doing the right thing and providing much needed funding and support across this system for sexual assault victims?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, as the member across the floor very well knows, and again I encourage him review the Hansard, that my comments were in support of the great work that the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre does and in support of the women who struggle across PEI with the results of being victim to violence and sexual assault.

Our department of family services, of health and wellness and my department, through Interministerial Women's Secretariat, work hand in hand to work together with the great organizations across Prince Edward Island that do help women who need those services.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much, MR. Speaker and that you minister for that statement.

What I've heard from these brave presenters was a cry for help – help with the traumatic events which they are victim to. Minister, we both attended these presentations, but again, clearly, you didn't listen. Your broken system needs more frontline resources to support these victims.

To the minister: How do you fail to recognize the huge wait times and gaps in counseling, psychological services facing all Islanders, including sexual assault victims?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, government continues to make strides in supporting women's wellness and one of the big challenges that we are facing with is trying to make sure that we provide the services when they're required. That's why this government has made the announcement of a women's wellness centre that's going to be located in the Prince

County Hospital. At that particular location, we're going to be providing lots of counseling services as it pertains to postpartum depression, as well as all the other services that we have for general mental illness issues that are out there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Cost of mental illness

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following on from the hon. member – last week Island Mothers Helping Mothers drew attention to what they describe as a mental health crisis on Prince Edward Island. Their core message was that government is not doing enough to protect and help Islanders suffering with mental health problems.

Question to the minister of health and wellness: How much does it cost the provincial economy every year in lost productivity as a result of the effects of mental illness?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, mental illness is a challenge that many individuals and many families face by times and we certainly, as a government, understand the toll that mental illness can have on families. We are working at trying to build a continuum of care that can provide and meet the Islanders' needs.

Once again, when we talk about some of the issues as it pertains to women – that's where the women's wellness centre is going to work and focus on a lot of postpartum depression issues. We do provide services and we cross-train a lot of our Public Health nurses to identify and pick up on particular mental health challenges – as well as the other services that we do provide all Islanders at our locations.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

New health clinics and staffing

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

According to a recently released federal mental health strategy, it costs the Canadian economy over \$50 billion annually, which equates to \$250 million on Prince Edward Island every year. This is budget day. \$250 million it costs the economy, and that's, of course, beyond the human costs of mental health.

The minister recently declared, with great fanfare, that there will be three new clinics opening in Prince County. He said they provide an opportunity to talk with a professional when they are in crisis – when help is needed right away. However, these clinics are only open for part of one day each week.

A question to the minister: How many new staff members were hired to staff these clinics?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Aylward: Great question.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed that is a good question and it comes to it – once again as we are working towards trying to meet the needs of Islanders when it comes mental illness and issues of that nature. We are trying to provide services that are immediate in that regard. So, yes, we have a number of opportunities and we have opened three different clinics in western PEI that are scheduled – you don't require any appointments. You can walk in and you can get immediate service and then they will refer to where you might have to go from there.

If it's a situation where a crisis exists, you have the services of 811, 911, emergency room doctors family doctors. There's a number of services that people can get immediate attention and –

Mr. Trivers: Please say you'll come back to the answer.

Mr. Henderson: – they will be referred to there to work on the counseling that is required.

Mr. Myers: Afraid to call 911, what kind of advice is that?

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Psychiatry treatment outcomes

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

I have no idea whether new staff are being hired for these clinics after that. Prince Edward Island places a heavy emphasis on psychiatrists as the first point of contact and for ongoing care for many people suffering from mental health problems. That's an extremely expensive way to provide services. Last year, one single psychiatrist billed the Province over \$1 – compared to, for example, psychologists, counselors, social workers, or even group therapy.

Can the minister provide this House with performance outcomes that would support the predominance of psychiatry as the preferred treatment option?

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: One of the things that we deal with when we deal with individuals requiring certain, particular needs, we have, once again, a continuum of care. We have – a lot of our Public Health nurses are trained and cross-trained in mental health issues. We have our psychologists in this province that provide services, we currently have 10 psychiatrists practicing and we've also added a psychiatrist to the emergency room at the QEH.

We're trying to meet all those needs, but it is a continuum of care, so we have nurse practitioners that do provide certain levels of training and, once again, it's about taking the existing resources that we have. But, we do have, once again, more issues that we're going to be dealing with the federal government and the new health accord has allocated money for mental health and we'll be taking those investments and investing them soon into Islanders.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. R. Brown: Here's a good one.

Mr. LaVie: Here we go.

Former Prince Edward Home property

Mr. J. Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: Could the minister inform the House as to whether the department of health or Health PEI has any future plans for the old Prince Edward Home property?

An Hon. Member: That's a good question.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The former PEI home has been a vital part of the health care in this province and it was remained active until March 2015, when the new Provincial Palliative Care Centre opened. There's still some property on the site that is being stored there. Once the building is declared surplus, my department has to set a process in place, which includes consultation with First Nations, discussions with other levels of government and consideration of the public interest in this property.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, your first supplementary question.

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

Minister, it's my understanding that departments and agencies must declare any property surplus and convey the property to the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy before that department can dispose of the property or determine an alternate use. In the case of the old PE Home, this has not yet occurred.

Could the member inform the House whether the department of health or Health PEI are actively considering the status of the old Prince Edward Home with the view of conveying it to the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Good question.

Mr. Trivers: No plan.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I indicated, Health PEI does have some property still at the PE Home building. However, we have been having discussions with Health PEI and they have indicated to us that they no longer have any interest in retaining that building. Once the documents are in place, we can begin that process of consultation and move forward towards a decision about this property.

We do want to make sure; we know there's a great interest in this property, that all options are considered with the best public interest in mind.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, your second supplementary.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and thank you, minister.

Minister, it's two years since the old Prince Edward Home was vacated, and time is beginning to drag on. Minister: Will you commit to communicating with officials in the department of health and Health PEI, that the consideration of the status of the old Prince Edward Home property be given high priority?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have been in constant communication with Health PEI, with the other departments across our government, as to any interest in that building. The property has not been formally declared process. That is an EC

memo that has to go through government, but we have also been having discussions with the City of Charlottetown and we recognize, again, this is a great interest in this property and we'll work with the city and all interested parties to come up with the best solution for the use of that property.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Some Hon. Members: Oh.

An Hon. Member: Here we go.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Rezoning of schools

Mr. Dumville: Many schools will be impacted by rezoning. One example, which is largely talked about, is Stone Park and Birchwood. Minister: How many schools will be impacted by rezoning?

An Hon. Member: That's a good question.

Mr. LaVie: Who wrote that question?

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

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

Good question. We will see 12 schools impacted. The reality of the situation – a number of months ago we identified that over 10% of the population of our students were out of zone. What we're seeing through the very well presented and considered recommendations for rezoning is we'll see 12 schools that will be better utilized to strengthen school cultures.

If you look at – Donagh capacity will increase from 50% to 86%. Stone Park capacity will decrease from 113% to 84% and Birchwood capacity will increase from 38% to 77%, to create stronger, healthier school cultures in our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister: How and when will families be informed of which school their child will attend?

Mr. R. Brown: Another great question.

Mr. LaVie: Hope you didn't email that.

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

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

I must remind the Assembly that transitions in the public school system are not new. We transition children from our early years' sector to our kindergarten programs. We transfer our grade six's into the intermediate schools and we transfer our grade 9s into grade 10. Schools in this province are very used to welcoming students and very familiar with appropriate, respectful, compassionate transitions.

Updated zone maps will be on the Public Schools Branch website. There will be communication to the schools and the principals that I have talked to are excited about holding open houses, barbeques and celebrating their new students as they come into the new school cultures.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Teaching positions in upcoming school year

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister: With school starting in September, when will teachers know in advance? Will they know in advance a month or two of which schools they will be teaching in?

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

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

Every spring we have a contract with the PEITF and as a government, we respect our obligations and those contracts. Teachers are reassigned every year based on population distribution, which will be no different moving into the next school year.

The current permanent and probationary teachers will be assigned based on their qualifications, suitability and seniority – very well laid out in the PEITF and we'll be working very closely with the Public Schools Branch.

We're getting excited about the changes. We're getting excited about embracing and creating new school cultures, and I'm excited that our government has committed to all FTE teaching positions for next September and I look forward with hope and optimism that this government will present a very positive budget in the next little bit.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Balancing budget

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, this tired Liberal government has a long history of budgetary failures. In 2008, Wes Sheridan told this House, as I have said many times in this House: This government is very dedicated to getting this budget balanced. History proves otherwise. In 2009, Robert Ghiz told this House: We were also able to essentially deliver a balanced budget last year. History proves otherwise.

In 2010, West Sheridan told this House: –

Mr. Myers: 2010.

Mr. Trivers: We will show how we are going to reach that balanced budget as we promised last fall and we'll show how we'll get to zero.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: History proves otherwise.

Premier: Why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe the recycled budget talking points of this tired government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Mr. Myers: Good job.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we have been in government for two years in our –

Mr. Myers: 10 years.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: We presented a budget in the spring of 2015 that we improved upon with the year's results. We presented a budget in the spring of 2016 that would have been balanced if it weren't for the HST setback and we're going to be presenting –

Mr. Myers: You created (Indistinct) setback.

Premier MacLauchlan: – a budget shortly in the spring of 2017 and I invite the hon. –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) revenue.

Premier MacLauchlan: – members to eat some crow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: Caw, caw.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: You can't balance a budget. You (Indistinct) revenue.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) last eight months.

Speaker: Okay, members –

An Hon. Member: Broken promises (Indistinct)

Speaker: Members, let's have some order. The Member from Rustico-Emerald does have the floor, so go ahead, member.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, I think I'm going to go for some Burger Love instead.

This tired Liberal government has a long history of budgetary failures. In 2011, Wes Sheridan told the House in 2011: As we move forward, we remain committed to achieving a balanced budget in 2014.

Mr. Myers: Oh.

Mr. Trivers: History proves otherwise.

In 2011, Robert Ghiz told the House: By 2014 we'll be in a balanced budget situation. History proves otherwise. In 2013, Robert Ghiz told the House again: We're on a plan to make sure we get our budget balanced by 2015-2016.

Mr. Myers: Oh, no.

Mr. Trivers: History proves otherwise.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Premier: Why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe the recycled budget talking points of this tired, tired government?

Mr. Aylward: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I see the hon. member there turning his pages and turning his pages. I hope he's going to keep turning them and tell them about the good news that we delivered to Islanders in 2016 and 2017 –

Mr. Myers: Which was what?

Premier MacLauchlan: – and in the coming fiscal year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Ignore the electorate.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker –

Speaker: Order, order!

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) the good news yet?

Speaker: Members, the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald does have the floor. Give him a chance to ask his next question.

Broken promises

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, I keep turning pages because there are so many broken promises here –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: – this tired Liberal government has a long history of budgetary failures.

In 2014, Wes Sheridan, told the House: Next year, we will present a balanced budget. History proves otherwise. In 2014, Wes Sheridan, told the House again: We are continuing to implement our plan to achieve a balanced budget by 2016. History proves otherwise. Once again, in 2014, this government issued a press release saying, a balanced budget was on the way. History proves otherwise.

In April, 2015, this Premier was serving as finance minister and publicly pushed out, yet again, a government balanced budget promise to 2016-2017.

Premier: Why does the Liberal party keep expecting Islanders to believe the recycled budget talking points of this tired government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, while I was finance minister, and in the two subsequent budgets, soon to get the

subsequent one for when the current minister serves as finance minister.

We have made promises and we've improved on them –

Leader of the Opposition: You haven't kept them.

Premier MacLauchlan: – we've improved on them. That's what we're going to continue doing, is delivering good fiscal management –

Mr. LaVie: Eighteen percent shows it.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and delivering benefits to Prince Edward Islanders.

An Hon. Member: I don't believe you're doing it right, at all.

Mr. Myers: Least popular Premier ever in this province. No, Catherine Callbeck was just (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) Catherine Callbeck.

Speaker: Hon. members.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, this tired Liberal government has a long history of budgetary failures.

In the first session after the election in 2015, the current finance minister told the House: We will remain as much as possible on balance to move toward a balanced budget in 2016-2017. History proves otherwise.

In July, 2015, this Premier told the House: We would, through 2015-2016, on into 2016-2017, arrive at a balanced budget. History proves otherwise.

Premier: Why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe the recycled budget talking points of this, oh so tired government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member must have turned one page too soon. Because the balanced budget that we promised is in 2017-2018, and we haven't yet heard about that, but –

Mr. Myers: You have no credibility though, (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – I invite the hon. members to stay tuned about that –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) your credibility is gone.

Premier MacLauchlan: We brought in a Budget for 2016-2017, and as I've said, it would have balanced, but for that \$30 million setback, and we dealt that. We have addressed it, and Islanders have every reason to have total confidence in the fiscal management of this government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: You're on the ropes.

An Hon. Member: He is on the ropes (Indistinct)

Speaker: Okay, hon. members.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, final question.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, Islanders are losing confidence very quickly –

Mr. Myers: Are they ever.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker –

Mr. Myers: Polls show (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – almost doesn't count. This tired Liberal government has a long history of budgetary failures.

Mr. Myers: So tired.

Mr. Trivers: In February, 2016, the Liberal party issued a propaganda piece under the Premier, which claimed: Government is on

track toward a balanced budget. History proves otherwise.

Last spring, the Premier was at pains time and time again to tell this House he had achieved a virtual balance, he just referred to it –

Mr. Myers: A virtual balance.

Mr. Trivers: Whatever that means.

Mr. Myers: Yeah, Catherine Callbeck style.

Mr. Trivers: Premier: Why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe the recycled budget talking points of this tired government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the opposition keeps talking about Islanders and confidence. Maybe if they read some of those polls they would have seen –

Mr. Myers: He believes the polls.

Premier MacLauchlan: – that the consumer confidence in Prince Edward Island, among Prince Edward Islanders, is at 1.06.7 –

An Hon. Member: Unheard of (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – that compares with Atlantic average –

An Hon. Member: You guys will be looking for a new leader soon.

Speaker: Members, I think we're lacking a little respect here, now.

Finish up, Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, consumer confidence leading the Atlantic region by a wide margin –

Mr. Myers: Ask Catherine Callbeck for advice.

Premier MacLauchlan: – confidence in the strategic direction of this province – highest that's in history.

When the opposition (Indistinct) asking about –

Mr. Myers: We know you're leaving before the election.

Premier MacLauchlan: – is our fiscal management. Islanders have very good reason to be confident –

Mr. Myers: Never be re-elected.

Premier MacLauchlan: – in the fiscal –

Mr. Myers: Never be re-elected.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and economic leadership of this government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) don't like you and you know it and your party knows it. I see it on their faces every day.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) the leader.

Mr. Myers: Yeah. Come on, Richard, let's go talk.

[End of Question Period]