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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

FRIDAY, 28 APRIL 2017

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Release of email accounts publicly

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

Will the Premier explain why the email accounts for deletion forms for Chris LeClair and Melissa MacEachern have not been publicly released by his government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I could go back and look into that and see if there is a particular reason.

It was my understanding that this matter had been fully investigated or looked into by the Auditor General and then in subsequent exchanges between the Auditor General and the Public Accounts Committee that that information was all made available.

But if there is a particular piece of paper or form that would be of public interest, I would be prepared to look at what might be done to make that available.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, the Premier continues to deflect this issue.

Chris LeClair's email account was deleted on October 19th, 2011. That was by request by the former premier Robert Ghiz.

Melissa MacEachern's accounts were requested by Neil Stewart on October 21st, 2013.

Question to the Premier: Why has your tired Liberal government continued to fail to come clean on the e-gaming scandal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as all members of this House will know, this matter was turned over to the Auditor General on the ninth day after I became Premier.

It's something that was deemed to be of public interest. It was thoroughly investigated. More than 10,000 documents, almost 60 interviews and quite a bit of time devoted to it –

Mr. Trivers: No witnesses.

Premier MacLauchlan: – by the Auditor General –

An Hon. Member: None of the –

Premier MacLauchlan: – in this House –

An Hon. Member: – witnesses we asked for.

Premier MacLauchlan: – in committee.

That matter has been fully dealt with, with 15 recommendations, which have been addressed and continue to be addressed as a priority by our government.

I'm confident that this matter is one that has been dealt with fully and responsibly.

Mr. Myers: Except for the lawsuit.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Releasing of deletion orders

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, at Christmastime, the Premier boasted about his thought of releasing all deletion orders for government dating back to 2007.

Question to the Premier: Why have you failed to follow through on your boast?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I'm not sure if that would be the language that I'd use or of any other reasonable person would use regarding my comments. It was in response to a question. I'm pretty sure that within minutes, or within some short period of time, there was press release from the Leader of the Opposition saying that wasn't what they were asking for.

In any event, the Auditor General did meet with the Public Accounts Committee and did address the issues that were of concern to the committee and to members of this House.

It is my understanding that the question of the people who had been – who were in the focus of the work of the Auditor General regarding e-gaming that they questions regarding their email accounts have been answered.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Release of email accounts publicly (further)

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

I gave the Premier until the end of February and then I decided to FOIPP them.

The response I got last month was it was going to cost my office \$1,000 to get these deletion forms.

Question to the Premier: Why are you throwing up more roadblocks to release the deletion forms for Chris LeClair and Melissa MacEachern?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member would know when a FOIPP request comes forward it's not something that would be in the knowledge of myself, as Premier, or as minister. This is dealt with according to a process –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) going to cost (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – I wouldn't actually have any reason to know what that response was under the FOIPP –

Mr. Myers: Perhaps we understand (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – request.

I have said and we've said from the time the Auditor General started her work, that there would be full cooperation and there has been full cooperation –

Mr. Trivers: Except for the witnesses (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – with the Auditor General –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) the witnesses.

Premier MacLauchlan: – in her work. The people are well aware of –

Mr. Myers: If your poll numbers were a ski –

Premier MacLauchlan: – what was found –

Mr. Myers: – hill it'd be double (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – by that report and that this government has acted on all 15 of those recommendations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Somebody came up with the cost of \$1,000.

This Premier hates answering questions and he hates independent oversight. No one has been held accountable for this tired Liberal government's e-gaming scandal.

This Premier and his government continue to block the release of information, obstruct the calling of witnesses and protect their friends and their insiders. They have never wanted the truth to get out.

Priority of Liberal government

Question to the Premier: Why are the self-serving interests of the Liberal Party the top priority of this tired Liberal government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy that we've got an invigorated government that brought in a balanced budget that is moving forward –

An Hon. Member: Fake balance.

Premier MacLauchlan: – with actions that are putting this province on the map and leading this –

An Hon. Member: Virtually fake balance.

Premier MacLauchlan: – region and doing well for Prince Edward Islanders and Prince Edward Islanders know they are doing well. They appreciate the kind of government they're getting. We're happy about that.

At the same time, as we're committed to openness and transparency and have acted on that on many fronts, including, by asking for and respecting the work of the Auditor General –

Mr. Myers: You won't make Old Home Week, the knives are out.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: You won't make Old Home Week, the knives are out.

Speaker: Order, members.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, we asked in Question Period, we have asked in standing committee. We have asked time and time again.

On February 1st, 2017, I also requested at the Public Accounts a copy of the proxy request for Melissa MacEachern's account.

Proxy request of account

Premier: Why have you not released this document?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

As minister responsible for the Provincial Archives and Records Office, very pleased to be able to respond.

The Auditor General in her work has done a good job of identifying issues around lack of electronic records management system in the province. This is not something that just sort of arrived. This has been a result of the evolution of how governments do business in respect to electronics, emails from paperwork; the limited ability for the office to enforce through lack of compliance; lack of policies and procedures; lack of resources to enforce compliance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, three full months ago on February 1st, 2017, I requested at Public Accounts – the system entry log for the deletion of Melissa MacEachern's account and the system entry log for the account deletion of Chris LeClair.

Premier: Why have you not released these documents?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Currie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've been fortunate opportunity to be part of this Assembly for over 10 years and, fortunately, as a cabinet minister and am very familiar with the work of the Auditor General. I must say that I have tremendous respect for the mandate that she is required to deliver to government and, we take the work and the recommendations from her report which was led by my colleague, the Minister of Finance, and was pleased, prior to Christmas, to present a three-year records information management strategy – not only to address the issues that she identified, but to bring records management into the 21st century here in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, three full months ago, on February 1st, 2017, I requested at Public Accounts a list of the workstation ID numbers for every device used by Chris LeClair and Melissa MacEachern and the current, physical location of all these devices used by Chris LeClair and Melissa MacEachern.

Premier, be a leader. Step up here. Why have you not released these documents?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. members will know, I don't sit on Public Accounts. Public Accounts has – whatever discussions take place –

Mr. Myers: You fingerprints are in there, though.

Premier MacLauchlan: – whatever discussions take place there – it would be my expectation, and it may not be one that is shared by the hon. member opposite – but it'd be my expectation, that if the Public Accounts Committee has something they would like the Premier to share with them, there is a normal process – which is that the Chair – and I've seen these letters: Chair, Co-Chair, or Vice Chair of the Committee, would write to me. To my mind, that's how it would be brought to the attention of the Premier. If there's a letter and for some reason it hasn't been drawn to my attention, I'd be happy to go and get to work and see what I can do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Send me a letter. If you want transparency, send me a letter.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

List of email account removals

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, three full months ago on February 1st, 2017, I requested at Public Accounts a list of the email account removals that occurred under the Premier's office from 2009-2016 – the date they were requested and the date they were carried out.

Premier: Why has this not been released?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Are you part of the coup to take him down? (Indistinct)

Mr. Currie: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to acknowledge the work and the leadership from the director responsible for Provincial Archives and Records.

I am not responsible for IT Shared Services, but the creation of the three-year records management strategy – which we presented in this House, which clearly defines a new direction in respect to the investments, the infrastructure, the policies and procedures – to make sure that we are moving the management of records and are working very closely with IT Shared Services to make sure that we have the ability, the resources and the legislative capacity, which we have brought to the floor for second reading.

I look forward to more debate on this and I look forward to continuing to modernizing our records management system, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Referral from Finance dept. to RCMP

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance admitted in committee that he was contacted by an RCMP officer who wanted to speak to IT staff over emails. The minister also admitted he referred the officer to someone in his department. He was asked that day and refused to answer, so I'll ask him again today.

Minister: Who in your department did you refer the RCMP to?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do, certainly, recall the question and I recall the day that I received the phone call from the RCMP officer and he simply wanted to track down someone within the IT services who could provide information on how things flowed from within the department. I provided that contact information to the RCMP officer.

Mr. Speaker, it was as simple as that.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Date of contact from RCMP

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, for some reason the minister does not want to tell us who exactly in his department he referred the RCMP to.

Minister: The AG's report was given to the RCMP in October. What date were you contacted, minister, by the RCMP member?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Great question. I do recall the day that the hon. Leader of the Third Party received a copy of the Auditor General's Report, made his way up to the RCMP headquarters on University Avenue – and I doubt he had the time to read it – but, in any event, he made that public and that's where it is. I have no idea what's taken place since. I haven't heard from anybody since.

With respect to the member of my staff, head of the Treasury Board secretariat is also the director for IT Shared Services, Dan Campbell, and he simply responded to that call, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Direct contact re: Finance minister and RCMP

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister: Why did the RCMP contact you directly, rather than communicating with government through the office of the Crown Attorney or the Justice Department?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly want to apologize. It wasn't the hon. Leader of the Third Party, it was the leader of the NDP and I apologize for that.

I think it's pretty clear why the RCMP would come to my department, that's where IT Shared Services is. That's where it's located, so it'd make perfect sense for the officer – whatever he's looking into – to go to the source. That makes complete sense to me, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

I apologize.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, we all know the minister is a former RCMP officer. Last night the Premier told this House that the Justice Department has had no contact with the RCMP covering e-gaming.

A question for the Attorney General: When were you and your department made aware that the minister spoke with the RCMP?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We can look around this room and there's lots of people had former jobs. I think it would be simply inappropriate for anyone in this government to have – certainly, as an elected member – to have contact with the RCMP in any way, shape, or form. The call that was made to my department – and to me, as minister of that department – was very simple: Who's in charge of IT services? The name was provided and that was the end of it. The call was as simple as that – nothing more, nothing less, no conspiracies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Once again, Premier. Be a leader. Stand up. Answer these questions.

Mr. Speaker, last night the Premier told us in the House that the Justice Department had no contact with the RCMP concerning e-gaming.

Will the Premier and Attorney General explain why the hon. Minister of Finance is fielding inquiries from the RCMP instead?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe that it certainly would be inappropriate for any minister or any MLA to have that kind of direct contact with an investigator in any way, shape, or form. It's just that simple.

IT Shared Services falls within my department. It's just pure common sense that the officer applied to make the call to the department where that service is lodged and where it is – perfect common sense, no conspiracy again.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, once again – Premier, I want the questions answered from you. If I wanted the finance minister, I would have went to the finance minister.

Last night the Premier told this House that the justice department has had no contact with the RCMP concerning e-gaming. Will the Premier and Attorney General explain why the finance minister is fielding queries from the RCMP instead?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, this whole line of questioning is obviously based on a misapprehension or a, perhaps, an intention to confuse the relationship –

Mr. Myers: Oh. Who's intending to confuse?

Premier MacLauchlan: – and the role of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. What is being asked about here is an investigation or a pursuit of matters that the RCMP have been asked to look into. They are doing that in their normal policing function. There's no reason in the world why they would come to the minister of justice or the Attorney General to get any kind of contact or permission or let me know what they're doing. It would be quite the contrary. It would be inappropriate and I think that was really the nature of the question and the short answer in 'oh no' last night when this was asked in estimates.

I do deal with the RCMP on policy matters, such as the unfounded cases and I have met with the commanding officer on that; the opioid matter that was addressed here yesterday. I met with the commanding officer the day the schools were closed with the bomb scare last fall. That's the role of the minister of justice or the Attorney General, but if the RCMP is conducting an investigation or they are following up on something that's been brought to their attention, the last person they would be going to would be the minister of justice.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) just they wouldn't go to you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

RCMP national anti-corruption unit

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, now that I've got you on your feet here we go again. In 2013, the RCMP launched a new national anti-corruption unit

focused on sensitive investigations involving senior government officials.

Will the Attorney General and Premier explain why he has not referred the e-gaming scandal to this national independent investigative unit?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: You're hiding.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

An Hon. Member: The boss has left.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) Old Home Week (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: I guess I'll just have to refresh the opposition on a couple of notes here because they seem to have forgotten that the Auditor General spent many hours, thousands and thousands of hours, her and her staff. They investigated this file. When it came to the final part of her audit, she brought in Legal Counsel. She discussed with Legal Counsel and had them look to see if there was anything criminal here.

The Auditor General is on record. She was on television with it. It was the day that she made her announcement –

Mr. Myers: She sent a letter to the Premier (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: – and said there was no criminal activity in this whatsoever. The only criminal activity that came to light was when the leader of the NDP Party grabbed a hold of a copy of it and ran up to the RCMP and said: Here, look at this; I think there's something criminal.

I'll put my faith in the Auditor General and the Legal Counsel that she had come in to give her advice on that. Clearly, no criminal action took place or no criminal matter took place in this file.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Finance minister's emails on e-gaming

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the finance minister table in this House next week all of his properly kept email records on e-gaming?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Any and all emails that I have, have already been files and the Auditor General has them.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, the minister pulled his best sergeant (Indistinct) routine at the Public Accounts Committee since he claims to have never been briefed and since he claims to know nothing. Surely, it will not be hard to find a few emails and table them.

Minister: Will you table next week your emails regarding the e-gaming file?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I find this very interesting that they're finally getting around asking those questions because we had the standing committee. Every one of these individuals had an opportunity with the Auditor General –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: – in front of them right there, to ask the Auditor General directly in the standing committee about it. All of my emails were released, the very few that there were.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: You didn't know anything about it. They didn't tell you. They kept it a secret from you. Makes sense, actually.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

French Language Services Act

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

In 2013, this government passed the *French Language Services Act* which designates services to be available here on Prince Edward Island in French. There also seemed to be a commitment to expand that list of services beyond just the French libraries, road signs and 511. But, neither the act nor the regulations have been updated since it was passed.

A question to the minister of Acadian and Francophone Affairs: Does government have any plans to expand the number of designated services in the French Language Services Act and its regulations?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

In the report that was tabled in this House just before the middle of December, it was indicated that there are areas that are envisage to further effort and a further commitment in the provision of French language services and I'm pretty sure they total six – they are in the order of four to six, but then it becomes a question of the priorities within those areas. Indeed, work is being done to proceed on those priorities as identified in that report.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

The outgoing French language services complaints officer who resigned, of course, in protest due to the minister's inaction on expanding the language services said to CBC last December that he had presented government with a list of what he called, low-hanging fruit, that could be easily implemented.

A question to the minister: How many of these recommendations have indeed been implemented?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the commitment that was made in that report and then that has been pursued in meetings with the community leadership, *La Société Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin*, is leading that effort.

We also have an advisory committee on French language services and the work is being done between the community organizations and leaders and the Department of Acadian and Francophone Affairs to identify a plan of action to –

Mr. Trivers: Less talk and more action.

Premier MacLauchlan: – indeed implement, in a priority order, those services as identified in the annual report.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Complaints officer for French language services

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I would interpret that, that none of these recommendations have yet been implemented. The complaints officer plays a key role in the proper functioning of this act, serving, in effect, as a link between the

public and government. The Premier told us yesterday during budget estimates that a new appointment is imminent. Though, I can hardly see the point in that if the officer's advice continues to be ignored.

Question to the minister: Do you plan to act on the advice you receive from your new complaints officer?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we have many contacts with and organizational relationships with the Acadian and Francophone community and one of the primary ways in which that relationship is worked out and where priorities are identified, is with the advisory committee, *comité consultatif*, with the Acadian community and is a very capable group there that has been meeting on a regular basis. To then pursue the precise point that is being asked, the designation of services for inclusion or addition to those currently being served under the *French Language Services Act*, is a formal process that is pursued once the groundwork has been laid.

The work is being done. The work is being done to identify the areas where additional services would formally –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – be recognized and offered under that legislation. In the process of getting there, there is a tremendous amount of work that is done in terms of actual French language service offered to the community by government with upwards of 200 public servants with bilingual capacity and the designation of those services is anticipated and will take place through a plan of action that is worked out together with the community. That will be done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Programs for seniors accepting applications

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Family and Human Services. The Seniors Safe @ Home Program and the Seniors Home Repair Program are now accepting applications. These programs provide support to Island seniors to maintain their independence and help with necessary renovations to their homes.

Would the Minister of Family and Human Services please explain to the House how seniors can apply for these programs and what the qualifications are?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.,

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government is very pleased to be able to provide these valuable programs to Island seniors. The Seniors Safe @ Home Program provides a grant of up to \$5,000 for a senior who is wanting to make modifications to their home. It will make it easier and accessible for them to remain in their home.

The Seniors Home Repair Program offers a grant up to \$2,000 for seniors, who are wanting to make modifications to their home or repairs to their home such as, repair a roof or a new furnace.

All the seniors have to be is under 60-years-old. One program, it's under \$35,000 is their net income and the Seniors Safe @ Home it's under \$50,000 net income.

More information can be found on our website, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Programs for seniors

Mr. Dumville: Minister, thank you for that information.

I think I can speak for most, if not all of the hon. members of this House, when I say that we all had questions from our constituents regarding these valuable programs and how people receive funding.

Will the minister please provide an explanation about how individuals are selected for these programs and what the screening process is?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To clarify, I think I said under 60, they have to be over 60, that's a senior. If it was under 60 I'd be a senior right now, which wouldn't be too bad.

Both of these programs are based on eligibility and it is based on annual income, net annual income.

If the applicants meet the program criteria the applications will be process as they are received. Basically, the programs are open year round.

When the funds are exhausted we do keep the applications and those applications would be then, in turn, process the next year, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Would the minister have any stats on how many seniors this program has assisted and helped them to stay in their homes and not have to rely on long-term or community care?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's a great question. The Seniors Safe @ Home Program began in February, 2015, and more than 330 seniors have been assisted through the grants, totalling approximately \$870,000.

The Seniors Home Repair Program was reinstated by our government in 2007. Since that time, more than 2,800 seniors have been assisted to a tune of \$3.1 million.

Again, I am pleased that we do have funding in the budget again this year for both of those valuable programs, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Vacant Summerset Manor

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy. The Summerset Manor in my district has been vacant since 2012.

I have had many inquiries from residents in Summerside regarding the province's intention for this building.

Can the minister inform the House of the status of this vacant building?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, it's no secret that the Summerset Manor has been vacant, as you say, since 2012. We are very interested in disposing of that property. It has been deemed surplus. We did put another RFP out earlier on. We did not have any responses to that particular RFP. We are still interested, certainly, in what may come forward.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My understanding is that some private developers and another group have shown interest in the building, and discussions have been ongoing with the City of Summerside and their interest in the property.

Has the department had any recent inquiries into the purchase of this building?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the Member from Summerside-Wilmot has been very engaged in lobbying and speaking with interested developers, as has my staff at our department, so working hand-in-hand. Certainly, the City of –

Mr. Trivers: Looking for a sweetheart –

Ms. Biggar: – Summerside –

Mr. Trivers: – deal.

Ms. Biggar: – have expressed interest. We are moving forward. We are waiting to hear back from some of those interested parties.

We are certainly open to working with all interested developers in the private sector as to the best use of moving forward on that, that would benefit the community.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, and a most important question: Is your department current open to any possible interest from other developers?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have had some discussions with several, actually, interested developers, which I

know, again, the Member from Summerside-Wilmot has been engaged with, as well.

We're waiting to hear back from one of those at the moment. We, also, are in discussions with another one. We are certainly open to working with the private sector on what use we may have which will benefit all of the community.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Universal basic income pilot project

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In December, this Legislature unanimously approved Motion No. 83 in support of moving forward on a universal basic income project for Prince Edward Island.

When the minister gave a progress update on this file earlier in this session, it said that: Work on this idea had stalled because Ottawa wouldn't pay for the pilot project.

Question to the Minister of Family and Human Services: Can you show me where in Motion No. 83 it said that federal money was required to move ahead on a universal basic income pilot?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government has said over and over again that we are very interested in the idea of a basic income guarantee pilot project.

Actually, after I was appointed in January, one of the first calls I made, within a month, was to my federal counterpart Mr. Duclos to have a conversation about just that.

I'm very aware of basic income guarantee. I read about it from many years. We would need federal input. We would need federal

partnership in moving forward on a basic income guarantee pilot project, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, the minister is not even using the proper terminology –

Mr. R. Brown: Oh.

An Hon. Member: It's Friday.

Mr. Trivers: – this is a universal basic income, not a basic income –

Ms. Mundy: (Indistinct) guarantee, sorry.

Mr. Trivers: – guarantee.

Motion No. 83 talked about building a partnership with Ottawa, but didn't mention a requirement of new federal dollars to proceed with work on a pilot.

As part of the update the minister tabled a letter sent to the federal government in mid-February on this issue.

A question for the minister: If a universal basic income pilot was a front-burner priority for this tired Liberal government, why did it take almost three months to send the feds a letter on it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Basic income guarantee is a term. There is actually a group on Prince Edward Island that I have personally met with. They are the campaign for basic income guarantee for PEI, or as an acronym: CBIGPEI.

In my conversations with them, they have also agreed, as has the hon. Leader of the Third Party, that federal investment would be necessary in order for a pilot project to move forward, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Leader of the Opposition (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Where is Trudeau?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Where is Trudeau (Indistinct) disappeared (Indistinct) here that day.

Speaker: Order! The hon. member has the floor.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, this tired Liberal government basically shelved the idea of a basic income project when Ottawa wouldn't pay for it even though the federal government did offer support through data.

Ontario got the same response from the feds, but accepted the research and data support for the pilot they've just launched.

Mr. Myers: Oh.

Mr. Trivers: Question to the Minister of Family and Human Services: If the federal government offered the same support to both provinces why is Ontario showing more leadership on a basic income pilot than this tired Liberal government?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Kathleen Wynne is less popular than you, if that's possible. It is apparently, possible.

Speaker: Hon. members, I think I'd like to have the hon. minister have a chance to answer the question.

The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tired Liberal government. We hear that over and over –

Mr. Myers: Because it's true.

Ms. Mundy: – but as you know –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) pretty good, actually.

Ms. Mundy: – in this current Budget, my department got an increase of \$6.6 million –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Mundy: That reflects –

An Hon. Member: Keep bringing it.

Ms. Mundy: – our commitment to Islanders.

For the government to call us a tired Liberal government – we've been in power for two years. Saying that we're tired is contrary to what we are –

An Hon. Member: Ready to go.

Ms. Mundy: We are energized, we are optimistic, and we're just getting started.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Recycled questions over there.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: Going back to motions from last year.

Speaker: Members, let's have a little bit of order. I know it's Friday, but let's be realistic here, okay?

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Ontario basic income pilot program and PEI

Mr. Trivers: This Liberal government is not only tired, they're slow, they're long-winded and they prefer talk over action.

Ontario has recently launched a targeted three-year pilot project on basic income with the federal government supplying technical support.

Minister of Family and Human Services: What discussions have taken place between

the province and the Ontario government on their basic income pilot?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Actually, when I was in Ottawa in January, I spoke to both of my counterparts in the Ontario government and got a great deal of information about their Ontario pilot project. If I'm not mistaken, Ontario has a population of about 12 million and they've targeted at about 4,000 people, because that's all they could afford because it is a very expensive project to undertake. I will continue to have conversations with my colleagues in Ontario, but in the meantime, we will continue moving forward. After this Budget, I will be very proud to say that I have completed seven of my 11 platform commitments that go towards helping Islanders who need it most, Mr. Speaker, when they need it most.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Stay down.

An Hon. Member: Stay down.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, the Ontario pilot is a big research opportunity, it's true. As part of the pilot, the data will be evaluated by an independent, third-party research group. Since this slow, tired, long-winded, Liberal government isn't keen to pursue a made-in-PEI pilot, there may be useful lessons to learn from the Ontario basic income pilot.

A question to the Premier: Will you reach out to the Ontario government about having independent observers from the Island – Islanders – monitor the progress of the Ontario pilot for lessons that could be applied to a future PEI basic income pilot here?

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as the minister has indicated, we made a very significant additional investment in responding to the needs of Islanders whom we can help and where we are acting with comfort allowance, with home renovations, with programs that are being enhanced. We're very proud of that and, of course, we are always following what's going on elsewhere and it doesn't mean because it's going on elsewhere that it's necessarily better.

We are happy and proud of the Budget we brought forward, of the policy work that's being done, and, of course, we are very keen to work with our community partners and with other governments to learn anything we can about how we can serve Prince Edward Islanders with needs and we are doing that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, this is your final question.

Tabling of Mill River contract (further)

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I did not hear a commitment to reach out to Ontario and try and engage Islanders – put them in contact with that pilot project to make sure that we're involved so we can have a basic income pilot here in the future.

A question to the minister of tourism: Will you table a copy of the Mill River contract so Islanders can decide for themselves whether taxpayers got a good deal.

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: Tired, tired repeat questions.

An Hon. Member: Confused questions.

Mr. J. Brown: Back to the front of the binder.

Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Myers: We don't need binders like you, big guy.

Speaker: I guess this is Saturday night. It must be Saturday night in a bar somewhere, is it?

An Hon. Member: The Prince Edward Room.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think the opposition got their binders mixed up because I think I heard this question from three other people.

Mr. Myers: Well, answer it.

Mr. MacDonald: You know it's interesting that we continue to go down this road. They know the procedures relevance to third parties and they are looking for a headline, but –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: – we all know that the majority of the people out there understand this deal. We've put everything on the table –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: They came in here yesterday and they talked about going back to 2012 and this deal and that deal and why didn't we do this, when one company is looking for a 10-year lease for \$1 of taxpayers' money with no development plan –

Mr. Myers: You just love Toronto millionaires, that's it.

Mr. Mitchell: He's supporting West Prince.

Mr. MacDonald: Unbelievable, Mr. Speaker, some of the comments –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: – and the innuendos. You know what? We deal with fact. I feel like I'm in the House with Donald Trump at times. But you know what? That's all good.

Mr. Myers: You love Toronto millionaires.

Mr. MacDonald: We're good, and we'll keep forging ahead because our economy is in a great place (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]