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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

TUESDAY, 9 MAY 2017

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, last week we established that it was the finance minister and not the justice department fielding phone calls from the RCMP. The minister finally admitted he referred the RCMP to the secretary of Treasury Board en route to speaking to a staff at ITSS.

RCMP and government staff re: egaming

Minister: Who were the particular staff members, within government, which the RCMP ended up speaking to?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I stated last week, I did receive a phone call. I had no conversation. I simply passed the officer onto Dan Campbell. Where it went from there, Mr. Speaker, I did not inquire.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, the finance minister knew it was inappropriate, but he still took the call. He directed the RCMP around to who he thought was the best to talk to.

Will the finance minister explain why he has chosen to deflect and downplay his involvement in the scandal surrounding egaming?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think there was anything untoward about taking a phone call, referring the phone call onto one of my staff members. That individual was the correct person to refer the phone call to because that person oversees, and all of ITSS report to him. It was the appropriate manner in which to use that. I certainly did not ask about the inquiry in any way. I simply referred the phone call because the officer wanted to speak to somebody from IT services.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Finance minister and Public Accounts

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, the very first response in the minister's testimony to the Public Accounts Committee was that he has never been briefed on e-gaming and the first time he became aware of the schemes was early 2013.

I have here today an email from deputy Melissa MacEachern to her minister, the now finance minister, dated August 7th, 2012.

It reads, by the way of email: An update on Simplex, global transaction platform for PEI.

Minister: Why does the truth not match up to your testimony at Public Accounts?

Mr. Myers: Great question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, have the exact same email with me here today. In that email is exactly what I responded to when I was asked the question. That was, in fact, exactly what I responded to when I was asked the question is what is contained in that email.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Withholding of information re: egaming

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, this email from Melissa MacEachern went to the current Minister of Finance and Wes Sheridan on August 7th, 2012. This minister has claimed he only found out about the scandals after the fact.

In this email briefing, point one reads: Innovation PEI executed a confidential MOU with Trinity Bay, TBT North American Simplex several weeks ago in order to enter into discussions on the nature of the relationship between IPEI and TBT.

Minister: Why have you been withholding information of your involvement in these schemes from this House?

Mr. Trivers: Yeah.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think that if the hon. member wants to check Hansard he'll find that I answered that question directly. I did say I was aware that there was an MOU in place, and I was advised by my deputy minister –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) headline in *The Guardian*.

Mr. Roach: – at the time that that was the case.

Mr. Myers: March 1st.

Mr. Roach: – and it's in Hansard.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: Never been briefed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Starting to choke?

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I quote from the minister, “I think the first time I heard anything in detail about that MOU, I think there was an article written in a Toronto newspaper.” 2015.

Mr. Trivers: That's what you said.

Deletion of records and emails

Mr. MacKay: Minister, this is another example of why all the records and the emails of your deputy, Melissa MacEachern, were all destroyed, and not given to the Auditor General?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I clearly answered that question. I clearly stated that I was aware of that MOU –

Mr. Myers: No, you didn't.

Mr. Roach: – a long time ago in this House –

Mr. Myers: No, you didn't.

Mr. Roach: – and on Hansard.

At that time, all I was aware of was that there was a meeting taking place –

An Hon. Member: Shame.

Mr. Trivers: Oh!

Mr. Roach: – between a couple of companies –

Mr. Myers: Keep your stories straight, or tell the truth.

Mr. Roach: – I was not –

Speaker: Hon. member –

Ms. Biggar: Keep track of that.

Speaker: – let the hon. Minister of Finance answer the question.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) correction on that.

Mr. Myers: You you'll get a retraction.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Carry on.

Mr. Roach: Again, in this Legislature. I clearly identified, you can find it in Hansard if anyone wants to take the time to look for it, that I was aware that there was an MOU between companies.

I had no idea what that meeting was about, other than there was a meeting to talk about a financial platform and that there was an MOU in place and that was the end of it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, when the Auditor General testified at Public Accounts she stated: The minister advised her that he was not aware of the details of the MOU.

This email from his deputy in August, 2012 updated the minister on the MOU and exactly what was going on.

Withholding of information re: egaming (further)

Minister: Why did you withhold your knowledge of these schemes from the Auditor General?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. –

Mr. MacKay: – he was not aware of the details of the MOU.

This email from his deputy in August, 2012, updated the minister on the MOU and exactly what was going on.

Minister, why did you withhold your knowledge of these schemes from the Auditor General?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Simply, what I was updated on was the fact that there was going to be a meeting, that there was an MOU in place, and that these were just conversations that were being held, and that if anything should come out of the meetings that there would be a business plan coming forward, at which time I would probably have a look at it, but nothing ever came out of those meetings, Mr. Speaker, that I was aware of.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Deputy briefing on Simplex and financial services

Mr. MacKay: Minister, why was your deputy briefing Wes Sheridan on the facts around Simplex and financial services, something that was running out of your department?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a matter of fact, there was nothing that was being run out of my department at the time. That was an MOU that was in place to talk about a financial platform; that's all I was made aware of. And, certainly, within that email, should anything further come of it, I would be advised, and there was never a business plan or any kind of an offer to anyone that ever came out of it that I was aware of, and that was the last I had to do with it, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Secret MOU and former colleague

Mr. MacKay: Minister, can you explain why your former colleague, Wes Sheridan, wanted to know about the secret MOU and why you and your deputy kept him informed?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, I've explained a number of times my involvement with it in this file, and I can't explain what any other minister may think or what action they took; that wasn't my role where I was at that time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Confidence in Minister of Finance

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Finance has not been forthcoming with Islanders. He has not been forthcoming with the Auditor and he's not been forthcoming with this House.

Question to the Premier: Given today's explosive revelations, will you be asking for his resignation, or does the finance minister continue to have your confidence?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I think the finance minister's doing a great job, and he has my confidence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister's reputation isn't shattered, and it appears like he's acting like he has a weak association with the truth.

Question to the Premier: Why is misconduct not enough for his resignation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we're in the sixth week of this House. At the end of the first week, the finance minister presented a balanced Budget for the first time in more than 10 years; enables our government to serve Islanders and identify priorities and address them.

And, on Friday of this past week, the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council released a report looking at all four provinces and I'll quote: Prince Edward Island holds the strongest fiscal position among the Atlantic Provinces, reporting a balanced budget and balanced out – the provincial debt per capita sits at the median for non-Atlantic Canada.

Mr. Myers: That's weak – that's the weakest answer (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: The finance minister has my confidence, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad there are some nurses in the gallery today, because it looks like your blood pressure's going right through the roof. You may need to be checked on before this Question Period is over if you're going to continue to cover for your finance minister.

This minister's in deep, and he's fielding calls from the RCMP, and he's misrepresenting his involvement in these schemes. He's misrepresenting his whole involvement in these schemes.

This explains the Premier's protection and the Premier's poor judgment.

Finance minister and egaming scandal

Question to the Premier: Is this minister's deep involvement in these schemes why you handpicked him to lead the cover up in your egaming scandal and deleted emails disgrace?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me give the opposition a couple of other numbers to think about.

The growth in Prince Edward Island's GDP –

Mr. Myers: End of your government right here today bud.

Premier MacLauchlan: – in 2016: 2.4%, third in the country, tied with Manitoba.

And I'll give the member opposite something else to think about: My blood pressure's 110 over 70. They tell me it's that of a teenager.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's good to see that running from the truth is a joke to this Premier; this Premier who said he was going to be better than Robert Ghiz; this Premier that said that it was going to be different under his watch.

This Premier makes a joke out of honesty in this House.

Mr. Speaker, this email from Melissa MacEachern to her minister is a detailed brief of Simplex's transaction platform. In fact, the deputy states Trinity Bay is TBT North American Simplex.

Simplex/CMT connection to Trinity Bay

Premier, why then does your filed defense in the \$50 million egaming lawsuit claim government had no idea Simplex or CMT were connected to Trinity Bay?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters talks about running from the facts; we keep reminding of the facts: Balanced Budget –

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Premier MacLauchlan: Record economic growth; best fiscal position in the region –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'll give you another fact: The lawsuit that they're now going through the entrails of for the second time was thrown out because there's of no significance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I'll be glad as the day continues to prove your insignificant comment wrong, Mr. Premier.

But I'm going to ask you to answer the question. You haven't answered a single question in this Question Period. You got up and you read from some document and then you talked about facts that aren't even the facts of what I've –

I want an answer to this question: Why does your filed defense of this \$50 million egaming lawsuit claim that government had no idea Simplex and CMT were connected to Trinity Bay? Can you answer that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Myers: Oh, no more quotes.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: – nothing to read –

Mr. Roach: I think it's quite clear that this matter is back again before the courts, and it certainly would be inappropriate for anyone in here –

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Roach: – to speak to the merit or lack of merit –

Mr. Trivers: I thought it was thrown out.

Mr. Roach: – on this particular thing that's – issue that's before the courts.

Mr. Myers: The Premier was talking about it.

Mr. Roach: And it was dismissed once, and it's the same old gang back again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not going to take a lecture from this minister on what goes on in this House and what's before the courts. His own boss just talked about the same lawsuit. It's this minister who won't give us the straight facts, and that's why I'm asking his boss to straighten it out, but he's too scared to stand for the truth. He's too scared to –

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) your boss.

Mr. Myers: He's too scared to go against the Robert Ghiz government. He's too scared of Robert Ghiz.

Government's lawsuit defense says Simplex and CMT had nothing to do with Trinity Bay. This email proves that that's false, and this government knows it.

This email also reveals that Billy Dow met at least twice with Trinity Bay's lawyer

months before Dow acknowledged his conflict of interest and double-dealing.

Insider trading and conflict of interest re: Billy Dow

Question to the Premier: Why does there continue to be no consequences for insider trading and conflict of interest when it comes to Billy Dow?

An Hon. Member: There we go.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance of course is correct to remind the House that this matter is before the courts. What I was reminding the House is it was before the court once before and was thrown out on a summary judgment as being in effect vexatious and of no substance, and that's where the matter stands. The parties are back, and that's what the government is defending, and it's defending the taxpayers of this province –

Mr. MacKay: You're just costing the taxpayers (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – the taxpayers of this province who are being –

Mr. MacKay: This is going to cost the taxpayers by the time you're done.

Premier MacLauchlan: – who are being faced with parties from outside the province who are coming back to take a second kick at it, and they're obviously being abetted by the opposition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've never seen such a disgrace for a Premier in my life as I've seen today. This is disgraceful. Your Question Period's disgraceful. The fact that you won't let the truth come out is disgraceful. The fact that

you are willing to defend the sins of those who came before you is disgraceful.

I have here, it says: Our lawyer, Bill Dow, myself, and Cheryl Paynter met with TBT subsequent to signing the MOU to discuss next steps.

I also have: Bill Dow and I will meet later this week with TBT to review the work plan.

The same lawyer met with Billy Dow to discuss the MOU multiple times, and it was even the same lawyer who signed the MOU for Trinity Bay.

Question to the Premier: How can you continue to defend the illegal actions of Billy Dow?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I will defend the taxpayers of this province from a lawsuit that has come back the second time and that the opposition is trying to drag onto the floor of this Legislature, because that is our job as government is to stick up for the interest of taxpayers, and certainly, when a group comes back for the second time after having been thrown out once, to make sure that that's exactly what we do, is stick up for our reputation and for the taxpayer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What, in effect, this government has done is expose Island taxpayers to a \$50 million lawsuit. It wasn't my work. It wasn't something that we did over here, though I guess we exposed your secret scheme at one point. You had an opportunity to clear this up. As a matter of fact, on CBC, before the election two years ago, you said that you would.

Question again to the Premier: Why do you continue to defend the illegal actions of Billy Dow?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, what I said on CBC is that we would defer this to the Auditor General, which we did. She gave it a thorough investigation. She reported to this House. She appeared before committee and I hear the member opposite referring to illegal actions and from everything I can tell from what the Auditor General reported, she did not report that there were illegal actions. So I'll call on the opposition to tame their language and speak to the facts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Referring case of Billy Dow to RCMP

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I feel bad for the Auditor General because what the Premier here is doing today is bringing shame to her role. Her job isn't to say whether or not there should be legal actions against anyone and you know it. You're the one that's twisting the facts here today and you should be embarrassed for putting the Auditor General in the situation you did. But let's go back to Billy Dow. Billy Dow is the top bag man for your Liberal Party, which likely explains why you're so willing to protect him.

Premier: Will your government act specifically on the Billy Dow file and what the auditor has observed and refer this case to the RCMP today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has a job to do. She serves the people of this province. She serves this Legislature. What she was asked to do was entirely within her mandate and she did a good job, and I'm not taking anything away from here on that. It certainly was clear that she said she didn't think there was any

criminal activity and I take her word for that.

I understand that other parties have undertaken to send something to the RCMP, but there's nothing before me that suggests that that would be an appropriate action.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question again to the Premier: Why do you continue this cover-up and why won't you ensure that somebody pays the price? Why won't you ensure that there is some consequences for the people that are involved in this?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the actions that the opposition continue to go back to were behind us by mid or by early 2012.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: The Auditor General looked into this. She brought a full report, she appeared before committee, she made recommendations – 15 of them. We've acted on all 15. I'll be tabling legislation later today to act further on those.

I'm proud of how we've responded to that, what we're learning from it, and of the good government that we continue to give to the people of this province and of the benefits that the people of this province continue to see in the economic growth, in the jobs. I didn't mention that; 2,500 new jobs in the past 12 months reported last Friday; tied with British Columbia, or in there with British Columbia for number one and two for jobs growth in this country, but that's what the opposition doesn't want to talk about because they know things are going so well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One thing I do know is that you trail your own party by 20 points and your popularity is as low as it can possibly be in Prince Edward Island.

Premier MacLauchlan: I do what I've got to do.

Finance minister first learning of e-gaming scheme

Mr. Myers: It's as low as it can possibly be in Prince Edward Island and I know you think it's a joke, but when you finally take the knives out of your back, before Old Home Week, you'll find yourself out of a job and everybody in here knows it.

I'm going to go back to the Minister of Finance. You've had some time to think about this. You've had some time to reflect on what you once told us – is that: I think the first time I heard anything in detail about the MOU; I think there was an article written in the Toronto newspaper.

Will you confirm to this House today whether that is the case – that in 2015 was the first time you ever heard about it – when *Robyn Doolittle* wrote about it – or, back in 2012 when the member up front here has the email where you were brought up to speed?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I know I clearly stated in this House and we'll search answer and we'll find it, but I did say clearly that I was aware of the MOU that took place in 2012. I was aware of it because the deputy minister came in and told me that we were going to be signing an MOU with a group to look at a financial platform and, clearly, the first time I heard anything about e-gaming per se, as quote-unquote e-gaming –

Some Hon. Members: Oh.

Mr. Roach: – not relative was when I read about it in the paper because, Mr. Speaker, I know the timeline of this and I know exactly where I was and what I said. I do stick by what I say here today and I do stick by what I said before in this House –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: – that I was aware of what had taken place and when the MOU was being considered.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

CLE dept. actions – open, transparent and accountable

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

The mandate letter for the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment states that this government's commitment to openness, transparency, and accountability.

Question to the minister: What is your department doing to be more open, transparent and accountable?

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

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

Certainly since I took over the role of Minister of Communities, Land and Environment I've worked closely with staff to provide open and transparent information when it comes to putting it online – all aspects of work that we do within the department, not only the department of environment, but the department of municipalities and planning and, as well, the department of fish and forest and wildlife. All departments have been indicated that we expect all information that all Islanders want to see is available for them to have a look at, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Appearance of witness to committee re: fish kills

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

In January, Standing Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries requested for the second time a witness from your department to appear to explain the delay in reporting of the fish kills – better called river kills – which occurred last season. The department has yet to allow the witness to appear before the committee.

A question to the minister: Why is your department delaying the appearance of a witness to discuss this issue?

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

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

I believe there was a letter recently sent back that said that when time permits there will be a member from my department that will attend to the committee for open discussions on those such items that were asked for.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Department collaboration on water act re: aquatic systems

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

When the new water act comes into force, we'll likely see stronger management enforcement of water contamination and I'm grateful for that. However, the new regulations will have little impact unless we address the roots of the problem. In the case of river kills, that root is very often agricultural practices.

Minister: What measure are you and the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries exploring that would work with the future water act to reduce the impact of agriculture on our aquatic systems?

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

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

Over the last year, with the development of our new agriculture officers within our department, I've been very pleased to say the relationship with our agriculture industry has moved in leaps and bounds. This is a group of individuals that go out and help those in the agriculture sector get into compliance, educate them on where they need to be today and it's been very effective. Reporting back has been quite optimistic of how that's going.

As far as the new water act is concerned, there's a complete section on there about the management areas around our watersheds and how we will protect those when it comes to such items as nitrates and pesticides. The agricultural community is looking very forward thinking to working with us and I'm looking forward to some great outcomes there as well, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Nursing strategy and changes to the profession

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

As was mentioned earlier here today, this is National Nursing Week which provides an opportunity to acknowledge and thank our nurses for the vital role they play in keeping people healthy. Nurses Transforming Healthcare is the three-year strategy that was recently released to set a direction for the nursing profession, given the changing nature of healthcare.

My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness: Can the minister inform the House of the focus of this strategy and the changes the profession is undergoing that led to the need for this strategy?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a great question to have with all our nurses here in the gallery. I'm very proud to

be the minister that's responsible for developing a nursing strategy. I emphasized that this strategy was created by nurses, for nurses and we did that in many –

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a great question to have with all our nurses here in the gallery. I'm very proud to be the minister that's responsible for developing a nursing strategy. But, I emphasize that this strategy was created by nurses for nurses and we did that in many different forms of consultation with some of the unions, some of the frontline workers and we do have a number of strategic priorities. One is building and strengthening recruitment and retention within our nursing profession, creating and sustaining an empowered workforce and environment for our nurses, and fostering excellence in clinical practice and optimizing the patient experience, and lead through innovation in the optimal care for our many patients that we serve.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Nursing strategy to improve recruitment and retention

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

Minister, how will this strategy help to address the problem of recruitment and retention of nurses in this province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

As you are well aware, we have mentioned it a million times in the House here that nurses actually provide the largest profession within our workforce, that deliver healthcare services to Islanders. Part of this strategy is really about trying to make sure that these 1,900 nurses are as effective and productive and feel valued in the work that

they do, and some of those goals will be about increasing the number of full-time positions.

We're looking at converting some part-time positions into full-time positions; recruiting new nurse graduates; launching a new graduate guarantee program, which I think will be very helpful for many nurses, and once again, continue to work with our associations and unions in making sure that we have a real good work environment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Minister, how will this strategy improve healthcare for Islanders and will it benefit nurses as well?

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

We really hope that it will benefit our nursing profession, as well as making sure that we're able to recruit and retain the nurses to this profession. As I said before, we have 1,900 nurses and some of those break down into LPNs, RNs, nurse practitioners and I think the big goal in our department is really making sure we have a good, collaborative approach to the delivery of care in this province and I think that's one of the big advantages, is that as we collaborate we can provide the best level of service for an individual that requires patient care in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

French immersion in Charlottetown schools

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Casey: Minister, there are many advantages to those who are able to communicate in Canada's two official languages. Our family recognized this when it was time to send our boys to school and I am pleased to say that they were educated in French from grades one through 12, and to this day can speak French. As a matter of fact, their dad became bilingual when he was elected back in 2011 and I can even say that I'm studying French at Collège de l'Île currently.

Minister: What schools in Charlottetown will be offering French immersion starting in grade one?

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

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

We continue to take great pride in the increase in the number of early and late immersion programs, and the number of students that continue to take French language education here in the province. We will be implementing, as a result of the changes – we will be providing an early immersion program as West Kent Elementary to provide early immersion to children in that zone that traditionally had to attend outside of their zone.

We are very pleased, and we are going to continue to work with the Public Schools Branch to continue to grow French language education and training in our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, your first supplementary.

Hiring of French specialists

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As you know, because of my experience with the French immersion program with my children, I know it's important that students

in the French immersion program received education from teachers who have a specialty in French language.

Minister: Can you let us know if there will be French specialists hired to teach the new French immersion program and how many French language specialists will we require?

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

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

Currently, this graduating class at the University of Prince Edward Island – we have 14 students that are eligible and will be graduating to teach French language education. In the next year we have approximately 20 students that will be trained to teach French language education. Before they actually teach in Island classrooms in immersion and late programs, they are required to take a provincial proficiency test which they have to reach a particular proficiency level in order to qualify to be eligible to teach French language education.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

French resources at West Kent Elementary School

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, it has taken many years to build a French library at Spring Park Elementary School. What assurances can you give parents, the new French teachers and the students that the same level of resources will be available for the French immersion program at West Kent as there is at Spring Park?

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

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

With the growth and the increase, we've got over 5,000 students participating in early and late immersion programs in our province. The standards and the expectations on training for French language educators are high and we continue to pay very close attention to balance and parity of all French programs and we are committed to making sure that all schools and all children have an equitable access to appropriate resources, teachers and programs.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Finance minister's involvement in egaming scheme

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We also have an email exchange during this time period between Wes Sheridan and Chris LeClair concerning this scheme, and it mentions the now finance minister several times.

Minister: We have the proof; will you now finally come clean and tell this House your involvement in this scheme?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have relayed to this House a number of times what my involvement was. I think one of the emails there certainly supports that when I said that I was made aware of a meeting that was going to take place, and there was an MOU signed. As I recall, I think it was actually during the standing committee when the Auditor General was responding to questions from those at the committee – I believe it was the Member from Rustico-Emerald who asked the direct question of the Auditor General. I'd have to refer back and get the wording for sure, but I believe that member asked the Auditor General about my involvement in this and I believe the Auditor General's response was, I was not involved in it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Inside information to Chris LeClair

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's quite possible because the Minister of Finance told her he wasn't involved.

Chris LeClair left the Premier's office and he and Sheridan were working on their own financial scheme. They were competing against the Simplex and they were stacking the deck in their own favour.

Will the minister of finance explain why he was funneling inside information to Chris LeClair during this scheme?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have no knowledge of the conjecture that the member is –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: – putting forward to this Legislature; at all.

I would remind everyone here that this matter is now currently before the courts and I have no intentions –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) hiding behind you. You can run, but you can't hide.

Mr. Roach: – of getting into deep debate or discussion on that because it's inappropriate, totally, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chris LeClair wanted the inside track on this deal and Wes Sheridan wrote him stating: The holdup on this file is that innovation has a pending agreement with another firm working in this space that we must honour. Al Roach will get me the associated timeline of this agreement tomorrow from Cheryl or Melissa, and I will pass the info to you.

Will the minister of finance explain why he fed confidential, inside information to Chris LeClair about an MOU that he claims that he knew nothing about?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think once did I say that I was not aware of an MOU. What I was aware of, and am aware of today, is a lot of the times when these – in almost each instance – when an MOU is in place, the MOU states that you must finish the work with inside that MOU before you can move onto another MOU if it involves whatever is taking place and that's – it was simply myself reading that and that's the end of it. I didn't filter any information to anyone at anytime.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Redacted gaming payments company

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chris LeClair and Wes Sheridan could not figure out how innovation had set up what we know now as the exclusive MOU.

Chris wrote: Wes, the only one I know, Melissa is speaking to is Philip Walsh in the Simplex post. Then, it says: Redacted: Letter to you with seeking a provincial opinion on whether the business activity was fulfilling gaming payments would be permitted on PEI. We were not asking for anything else. As a result, I don't understand what Melissa and Cheryl's discussion with another

company have to do with redacted proposition.

Minister: Will you come clean and tell Islanders who the redacted gaming payments company is that Chris LeClair had partnered with?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was my information at the time, I was aware that there was an MOU. As long as one MOU is in place you cannot speak to another party respecting something of a similar nature. That's written right into the MOU.

Mr. Speaker, it's as simple as that.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Missing letter from Chris LeClair to Paynter, Sheridan and Roach

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Wes Sheridan wrote back and he said: Sure thing, Chris. Remember, you copy the same letter to Cheryl and Al Roach when you sent it to me. Al approached me the next day to say they couldn't discuss the option with redacted until the timeline expired with the other company, who I expect to be Simplex.

Will the Minister of Finance explain why this letter he and Cheryl Paynter and Wes Sheridan all received from Chris LeClair has never ever come to light?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Finance, before you answer the question, I would just like to remind the hon. member you shouldn't use –

Mr. Myers: Oh, sorry, I was just trying to quote him.

Speaker: – a hon. member's name.

Okay?

Mr. Myers: Yeah.

Speaker: Go ahead, hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I have always stated that I was aware of the MOU. Within that MOU it says you cannot discuss another file while that MOU was intact, or is in place. Once that MOU expires then you can talk to another party. That was my involvement in that.

That's the end of it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Confidential information re: MOU approved by Dept. of Finance

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Wes Sheridan's answer in this email continued: I have set up two meetings with Melissa to get the details explained to me as to how they shut out other companies while negotiating with another in the same space. Both had been cancelled. The current Minister of Finance has promised to get me the answers tomorrow.

I didn't use his name (Indistinct) anyways.

Will the Minister of Finance tell all Islanders what answers he shared with Chris LeClair and Wes Sheridan violating the exclusive and confidential MOU that his own department approved?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I had no direct conversation with Wes Sheridan or LeClair on that file. I certainly said to the staff: While that MOU is in place you cannot speak to another party because that's part of the agreement.

It's as simple as that. If I am doing business with one person about a particular business type and I have an MOU, within that MOU it states that I cannot start to have a conversation with another business.

It was that simple. My answer to the deputy was: You can't have a conversation with somebody else while that MOU is in place. That's the way it's written.

It's as simple as that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Collusion between finance minister, Sheridan and LeClair

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the emails, and I will table them here later today, clearly outline is that this Minister of Finance was funnelling that information to Chris LeClair who was setting up a company that was exactly the same as CMT, which is the basis of the CMT lawsuit.

Question to the minister: Will the Minister of Finance explain his apparent collusion with Wes Sheridan and Chris LeClair?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is nothing to explain because there was no collusion.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's very clear by these emails that Chris LeClair left government to start a company that was doing the same thing as a company that this minister had an MOU with. Once

they got out there, they started asking for information from this minister and Wes Sheridan was going to this minister and getting the information; funnelled out to Chris so they could cost the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island \$50 million in a lawsuit. That's effectively what you guys did back in the day.

You effectively put us at a risk of losing \$50 million on a lawsuit because you were colluding against a company and trying to help one of your friends.

Question to the minister: What was your reward for conspiring with Chris LeClair and Wes Sheridan on their financial services scheme?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: (Indistinct) balanced budget.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, the hon. member is going into a current case that's before the courts, and it certainly is inappropriate to speak about the merits or lack of merits of that court and that case in this Legislature, and we continue as a government to move forward. We did achieve a balanced budget with a small surplus. We had some of the best growth numbers in terms of GDP across the country. We had some of the best wage growth for Islanders across the country, and that is good work. It's good business for Island businesses and it's good news for every Islander that's out there in PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]