



Session:	2/65
Date:	11 May 2017
No:	63

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

THURSDAY, 11 MAY 2017

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: Questions will begin with the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Draft report on Democratic Renewal

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A draft report from the Special Committee on Democratic Renewal was given to me on Thursday, April 25th, to sign off on.

A question to the Premier: Premier, were you aware that this draft report was circulated to members of our committee?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it came to my notice because I saw a comment in *The Guardian* that I believe originated from one of the committee members, but otherwise, no, I was not aware.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, I'll say that again. Thursday, April 25th –

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Go ahead hon. member.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you.

Mr. Premier, I had mentioned Thursday, April 25th; those comments were in *The Guardian* after that date.

We were given this report on Thursday, April 25th. Were you aware of the draft report that was circulated to members of our – were you aware that that report was circulated to our committee on Thursday, April 25th?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

An Hon. Member: Easy question.

Premier MacLauchlan: No, Mr. Speaker, I was not aware.

Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Meeting re: discussion on Democratic Renewal

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, on that same day, I emailed our committee to request a meeting to discuss the original mandate of our committee outlined in the White Paper.

Premier, were you aware that I made this request to have another meeting to discuss the original mandate of the committee?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: No, Mr. Speaker. The committee, I'm sure, has its own deliberations, and I was not aware of that, whatever those deliberations were.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

House leader appointed to DR Committee

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Guess what happened next. That was the 25th. Let me read you a letter the Premier sent to our committee dated April 26th, the very next day: Please be advised that the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park is appointed to be a member of the Special Committee on Democratic Renewal, effective immediately.

Question to the Premier: Why did you feel the need to appoint the House leader as soon as I requested another meeting?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, for starters, those letters go from my office as there are replacements or substitutions; it's the normal practice of the work of legislative committees. Indeed, I suppose I sign letters similar to that, probably several or more than several per month, and I'd have to say I did sign that. It was in recognition that there's been a vacancy on that committee since the resignation of the MLA for Summerside-Wilmot last summer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So the Premier didn't know that there was a draft report out. He didn't know about my request to have another meeting. And then, apparently, he signed this letter that went across his desk because there's a number of them a month.

So keep in mind that our committee already had a draft report in hand, Mr. Speaker –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: Keep in mind that our committee had already met multiple times in the past year with four members after the former Member from Summerside-Wilmot stepped down.

Premier, what was the rush to appoint shut-down-Brown over there to our committee?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Mr. LaVie: Shut-down-Brown – shut them down.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we have a caucus of 18 members, and these matters come up in terms of who will be at meetings or what membership there is and what schedules there are and so on.

As Premier, it's not my role to be aware of, or indeed – and I'm sure that's the gist of the question – the implication being that I would not be aware and I wasn't aware of the work of the committee – but on the question of committee membership, the formal process by which a member of our caucus is designated to take part in the work of this or other committees, I'm sure I've signed similar letters since that date in April.

That's the way it gets done. It falls to me –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: It falls to me as leader to do that work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let's take the Premier at his word and he doesn't realize about the bad optics of all of this.

Premier, who did approach you to put down the House leader on the committee?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Mr. Myers: He just can't stop tinkering in it, eh?

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, those discussions take place within caucus. We

have a House leader who would always be aware –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) appointed himself.

Premier MacLauchlan: – be aware of that, and it's important to the work of the Legislature –

Mr. Myers: Bullets for everyone. Save yourself.

Premier MacLauchlan: It's important to the work of the Legislature that the committees be –

Mr. Myers: There's a leader for you.

Premier MacLauchlan: – there be a quorum, that people be present, and that there be schedules and so on. It's the way of our caucus to be on top of those things.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll remind everybody again. Draft report in hand, request to go to the committee for another meeting, a new member appointed, the Premier didn't know about it, the Premier won't say who asked him to appoint that person to it.

My request for another meeting on the original mandate of the committee was turned down. I'll quote the email sent to our committee.

It said – this is from the Clerk: I have consulted with the Chair regarding this meeting. This meeting will proceed as previously scheduled to discuss the report of the special committee to the Legislative Assembly; not – and Premier – sorry –

In camera meeting for DR Committee discussion

Premier, were you aware that the Chair decided to not have an open-to-the-public meeting on our original mandate, but opted

instead to have an in camera meeting to discuss the report?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, this is the work of the committee that's being asked about, and in fact, I'm supposing that some of the discussions that are being talked about here are confidential to members of the committee, so I have to say I did find it surprising to see some of this commented on in the newspaper, but I was not – I don't take any part in what the Chair does or what the committee does –

Mr. Trivers: Except for appointing members –

Premier MacLauchlan: – or what meetings they have.

Mr. Trivers: – suddenly after months.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Telling the Chair what to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My request to have another meeting focused on election financing, but our committee was also tasked with things like, looking at ways to increase the participation of women, Aboriginal Islanders, Islanders with disabilities, visible minorities in the Legislature; yet we also suggested a review of the legislative schedule.

We were supposed to – public engagement to level the playing field when it comes to campaign financing, and we were supposed to inform the work of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. It will be interesting to see what is in this final report.

Premier: Do you think the committee has completed its mandate?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, by the sounds of things this is something that it still under discussion among the committee, or in some form –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) we want to know what you think.

Premier MacLauchlan: – a draft report. I, like other hon. members of this House, will look forward to learning what the committee has to say when it presents its report.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Inside information to Chris LeClair (further)

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The finance minister has been caught spinning tales and avoiding the truth this past week. Surviving emails prove the minister funnelled confidential insider information to Chris LeClair. Among the tales the minister is telling us is that e-gaming and the financial services have nothing to do with each other.

This government 2011 Simplex report said: The government of Prince Edward Island has committed to create a global transaction platform. Phase one will be the creation of a regulatory regime and the supporting technology platform for e-gaming.

Minister: How many times do we have to catch you before you resign?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Finance, before you answer that. Hon. member, you have a very unique way of expressing things and you are very close to unparliamentary language. Very close.

Ms. Compton: I'll take that (Indistinct)

Speaker: So just cool it.

Ms. Compton: Cool it.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise in the House again and to address the question that has been posed.

From the outset of this, this was a file that, I believe, started back. I get this from the Auditor General's report that this was a file that started back, I think, in 2009.

My first, I guess, involvement in any sort was the Memorandum of Understanding that I talked about earlier. That happened, I believe, four or five months after the so-called e-gaming file was closed by the government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

FOIPP request for emails pertaining to e-gaming

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The FOIPP request, which dug out the surviving emails asked for all emails related to the e-gaming initiative; these surviving emails, which the minister had admitted to briefed the minister on the MOU and the financial services scheme.

Clearly, by signing off on this FOIPP the minister's own deputy knows the schemes are one in the same, and the minister does to.

Minister: How many times do we have to catch you before you resign?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I recognize that the Member from Belfast-Murray River wants to talk about the past. I have no intention of resigning at her request. I didn't spin any tales.

In the last number of years since I have taken this job as Minister of Finance, we have worked extremely hard throughout government. We brought in a balanced Budget. We have an economy that is the third best in the country. It's something that all Islanders can be very proud of, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Financial services platform and e-gaming initiative

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chapter 6 of the Auditor General's report tells us that: On May 11th, 2011, the former chief of staff, Chris LeClair, and Simplex CMT staff presented the opportunity of marrying e-gaming and the financial services platform to the secret e-gaming working group.

Minister: How many times do we have to catch you before you resign?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe the member talked about May, 2011. I think I was lobster fishing then. But, in terms of this file the Auditor General did some tremendous work; a lot of hard work by her and her staff. They went right back to when this file began –

Mr. Trivers: Could have done better with more information.

Mr. Roach: – the Mi'kmaq Confederacy asked for this to be looked at. Clearly, in

2012, February, the so-called e-gaming file, as it has been called, was shut down.

The Memorandum of Understanding that I was made aware of in July, 2012, a number of months after the e-gaming file was shut down.

I was made aware that there was a memorandum that was being signed to have a conversation with a company.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Marketing financial transaction platform proposed by CMT

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe, when I asked the question in Public Accounts, the minister said: I was never briefed.

Mr. Roach: Yeah.

Ms. Compton: End of story.

In the original lawsuit it stated: It was very important to Paul Jenkins, Chris LeClair that the CMT financial transaction platform accommodate e-gaming clients.

In his own file defense, Paul Jenkins, confirmed this, stating: The Province of Prince Edward Island was interested in e-gaming and would require the infrastructure for same, which presented an opportunity to market the financial transaction platform proposed by CMT.

Minister: How many times do we have to catch you before you'll resign?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't know, Paul Maines, he has obviously been talking to the member opposite. She was able to quote him.

But, it's pretty straightforward. I said it before and I'll say it again, today: When I became minister of innovation in the fall of 2011 –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) from saying (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: – I was never –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) nobody.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for that mansplain.

Yesterday, the finance minister told this House: When that MOU was signed in July of 2011, I had heard nothing about e-gaming and there was nothing about that MOU that, as a result of what I learned from reading the Auditor General's report that was connected.

Minister: How many times do we have to catch you before you resign?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, when, in July of 2012, I was not aware there was an e-gaming file. I have said that before, and I will continue to say it because that's the correct answer. It's the truth.

All I was made aware of was that fact that some people in my department, through and through MOU, were going to sit down and discuss a financial platform with a company.

At that time I was not aware there was an e-gaming file. I was never briefed, at that time –

Mr. Myers: Back to the Sergeant Schultz (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: – or prior to that –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: – the only time I learned about it was at a much later date and, of course –

Mr. Myers: I see nothing –

Mr. Roach: – as we all –

Mr. Myers: I hear nothing –

Mr. Roach: – know now –

Mr. Myers: – I know nothing.

Mr. Roach: – the – after reading the Auditor General's report we are aware of it now. Now, we can look back and see what took place as a result of the Auditor General's report, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Cabinet restricting Auditor General

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have a copy of the letter the auditor sent to individuals she was interviewing over these scandals.

The letter shows how the Premier and the Cabinet deliberately restricted the auditor. Executive Council, which is Cabinet, has requested my office to examine a report on government's dealings on Simplex, CMT and all related companies in relation to e-gaming and financial services.

Question to the Premier: Why did you and your Cabinet minister deliberately leave Chris LeClair's secret scheme beyond the reach of the Auditor General?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: You were in on it.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, when the Auditor General was asked to look into this matter it was deliberate to draw the mandate as wide as possible. Indeed, to enumerate the matters, as the hon. member

has just read them so that the Auditor General would have a wide scope to her work. Indeed, she did.

She spent months and she interviewed almost 60 people through hundreds of hours and was through 10,000 or more documents. That was exactly the point when that executive memo to Cabinet was brought forward. When the Auditor General was asked to take on this mandate that she have a wide mandate; that she have the resources, which were provided to her, and that's indeed what the Auditor General did; a thorough job and one that we respect and accept.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Truth and government defense (further)

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This week the Premier said the following of the auditor's investigation: She gave it a thorough investigation. She reported to this house. She appeared before a 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.

Premier: Why is the truth opposite to your statement in the House?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

I'm not sure exactly what that question is, but if I'm being asked whether the Auditor General did, in fact, report that she looked at everything and that she didn't think there were criminal matters, that in fact is what the Auditor General did say. That was the conclusion of her very thorough work with the wide mandate and that is the Auditor General's report and we have taken it – the 15 recommendations in their fullness – and we are moving forward and we are giving the people of this province good government based on the Auditor General's advice.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Islanders need to know the truth on this file. That's what we've been trying to get across to government from the very beginning and we keep getting stonewalled. When questioned about activity happening outside the actual MOU, the Auditor told the committee on November 10th, 2016, she was looking at authorization and the due diligence with the MOU. Today we find out why: because the Premier and these ministers deliberately chose what the Auditor could and could not investigate. The cover-ups need to stop.

Illegal actions of government re: records

Premier: Why did your government destroy all the records and deliberately limit the auditor, hoping the illegal action of Chris LeClair, the minister of Finance, and others would never see the light of day.

Mr. Myers: Good question. That was good.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As she's now currently talking about this government, as the Minister of Finance, all of my emails were available to the Auditor General and also, the emails that the opposition have been referring to for the last three days; the Auditor General had those emails as well.

When I read the email itself, it's simply – I think there are four or five points in there that outline what's taking place. They're talking about a financial platform. I've laid out the dates of when the MOU was signed to talk about this financial platform. I talked about the date in February of 2012 when the e-gaming file ceased by government and clearly, the MOU that was signed and took place in July – was months after the file was closed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

For centuries, agriculture has shaped our province and the success of farming has a profound impact on our economic, social, and environmental well-being. While yields and export numbers are useful statistics to track, it is farm income that is of central importance when it comes to the sustainability of Island farming.

Trends on farm income on PEI

A question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: What are the trends in farm income on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

It's a very interesting question, but there are two sides to that for sure – there's the income, but there's also the input costs and you have to put the two of them together to follow any trend going forward, but we can see a rise in the fertilizer price – last year we could see a decrease in it, this year – all the input costs certainly affect the bottom line.

Our amount of crop we get off per acre is certainly going up in many ways too, but again, it takes more input costs. So, that's what the farmers are working on day and night – is trying to get the most income from their crops with the lowest input costs if possible. That's why the technology has changed so much now. They have GPS and they spray or they fertilize or whatever in a certain, specific part of a field that needs it, but not in a part of the field that doesn't.

It's the technology that we're putting in place as well. It really helps the bottom line on the farmers and we're going to continue to use technology – whatever that might be – to make sure that our farmers thrive in this province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'll explain to the House what the trends are. As fast as gross revenues have continued to rise, farm incomes have declined. From the mid 1970s, when farm revenues on Prince Edward Island totaled about \$300 million – excluding government payments – they consistently generated profits of over \$100 million. We now have revenues that have peaked at around \$500 million a year, but farm profits are in the order of only \$25 million – again, outside of government payments, which this year are budgeted at \$27.8 million.

Pattern of declining farm incomes

Minister: What is your department doing to reverse this worrisome pattern of declining farm incomes?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

This is one of the things I just spoke about. Innovation – we are supporting that in many, many ways. But you take supply management where we have very little input costs into that from government, where the farmers themselves run that system. They run it very well for the last 45 years – where they go out and they come up with a cost production formula, for example, and what it costs to produce a dozen eggs, what it costs to produce a litre of milk – that's the actual costs in there.

With regards to the other commodities that are not in supply management, they are at the whim of the world market, to some degree. In potatoes, we may make a terrific dollar in potatoes one year based on a disaster that may be happening somewhere else. Unfortunately, sometimes that disaster happens right here.

We are working in our department and in the federal government, with the hon. Lawrence MacAulay to make sure that we do have markets, not just depending on the old ones

we have, but developing new ones where we can increase the bottom line to our farmers – and we will continue to do that from year-to-year.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: Great. Good.

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

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

I heard: We're going to keep doing what we've been doing for the last 50 years. The provincial and national agricultural strategy has been to continue to develop exports and commodities, as the minister just said, for international markets, but clearly this has not been a successful approach for a number of very complex, but quite predictable reasons.

Future prosperity of Island agriculture

Minister: When will this provincial government unhitch itself from a failing strategy and recognize that the future prosperity of Island agricultural sector lies in developing high-value, healthy products for predominately local markets with exports as only a secondary concern for surplus production?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

You know, hon. member, we would love to have supply management in all commodities, but we can't get that anymore. With the free-trade agreements and stuff right now, if hogs wanted to go into supply management or beef wanted to go into supply management – we can't do that. In the supply management commodities, the income is basically secured based on a simple cost to production formula. They're not getting real rich at that.

We in our department are working with innovation. We're working at new crop development, working with interest groups

that are bringing new crops into the province and encouraging our farmers to grow them. The big key that we are trying to work on too – save our soil, improve our soil, and get into a really good rotational crop system where it's not just potatoes, barley, hay, and continuing that way, because a lot of farmers can't make money on the second and third year crops.

So what we're trying to do is get a crop that will rotate with our main crop of potatoes and return extra dollars into the pockets of our farmers, but we cannot just survive feeding the 140 or 150 thousand people on PEI. Our farmers want to grow for the world. The world wants our crops. The world wants the quality product that we produce here on Canada's Food Island.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Funding to literacy alliance re: benefit students

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of education: I understand there has been some new funding given to the literacy alliance to provide tutoring for students during the school year. Can the minister explain to the House how this will benefit students?

Ms. Biggar: Great question.

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

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

The member from Summerside is correct. We have a strong working relationship with the literacy alliance and they're doing great work under the leadership of Amanda Beasley.

The Literacy Alliance approached myself early in the new year to look at support for a new program they're running – it's called Ready, Set, Learn! We know that the

alliance does some tremendous work with summer tutoring program, but this initiative is in partnership – we were able to support the alliance with myself and the Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning for some additional resources of \$15,000 to allow for supports to children during PD days during the school year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister: How will this help students in Summerside?

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

Mr. Currie: Mr. Speaker, all members of the Assembly know the importance of literacy and that it is a key pillar and foundation for our success as a province. This initiative will support a program which will be approximately eight to 10 PD days. The program will – it's a new program – will roll out in Charlottetown, but we are committed to supporting the initiative. We are committed to supporting the initiative in Summerside and Montague moving forward, because I believe that all children need the most equitable opportunity to strengthen their literacy skills and this is a program and we're going to continue to build a positive working relationship with the literacy alliance. I hope all members of the Legislative Assembly will continue to do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

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

My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: All kinds today.

Issues of recalls in food supply

Minister, there has been a lot of news coverage lately about food recalls, as well as the Norovirus outbreak in British Columbia linked to oysters.

Minister: Is your department tracking this, and do you know why we are seeing more frequent issues with our food supply?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

I hope this House continues for many weeks yet to come because finally, week five and week six we're getting some awesome questions on our natural resources, which is terrific.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: That issue, Mr. Speaker, is a very important one.

Unfortunate items like the one in BC do happen with their oysters, but I think it's actually because of the public trust and the focus we're putting on that, both at the federal government level, the provincial government level, the processor and the producer level, that we are putting so much emphasis on public trust because it is the consumers who are purchasing our food and they are becoming more and more aware and more and more interested in where their food actually comes from.

We have put in place, now, a lot more technology so that we can detect if there is a problem, so we can tackle that before it becomes widespread. I think that's the reason that we are finding, perhaps, hearing a little bit more about it. But, we are countering the problem before it gets too widespread.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Ask about caviar next, bud.

Mr. MacEwen: Can we bring the price of lobster down? It's too expensive.

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

Confidence in exporting of food products

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

My supplementary question to the minister: Minister, can Islanders and Canadians feel safe about what they are eating and how can countries that we export to be confident in our food products?

Mr. LaVie: Yes.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Another really good question. Canada is very well known and very well respected for the quality of the products they produce and it's terrific that we have that reputation. But, we put a lot of dollars into the public trust piece. Of the dollars we put out through our department, 28% of it basically goes directly towards public trust with the different commodities. That's so important.

Yesterday, I was so fortunate to be at the meeting with the other members of agriculture from across the country. We are working on the Growing Forward 3 or the next policy framework. Public trust is actually a big part of that and we had an opportunity to discuss it even further. Our consumers are becoming so much more wary all the time of where their food is, and they are going to watch each and every one of us.

Many of the commodities have now developed a code of practice as to how they look after their animals, how they grow their crops or whatever that might be, and it's so important. Public trust is issue number one for a lot of us and it will continue to be that way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Minister, you may have answered this in part already, but what can industry and our government's do to help Canadians with this type of thing?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

I should expand on it a little more because public trust is one of the new pillars in the next policy framework. We, as a province, have put an extra \$100,000 into public trust going forward in the next budget and we're very pleased with that.

Because we balanced the budget we have dollars we put in areas like that, we can put it in a public trust. It's so important. We will continue to do that to support our major industries here on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

MOU details

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the minister of finance admitted that he didn't know the MOU details. He said he told his deputy, Melissa MacEachern: You can't have a conversation with somebody while that MOU is in place.

Question to the Premier: Will you admit today that that somebody else was Chris LeClair that Melissa MacEachern was speaking of?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as far as I know when we come to Question Period we are to answer on matters that are within our current portfolio. I have been in this House since May of 2015 in my role as Premier since February of 2015, so I'm not able to speak to the matter that's raised by the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have another email in my possession today. In 2011, Chris LeClair sent an email introducing him to Carta Worldwide.

Question to the finance minister: Are you familiar with Carta?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, no.

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

Carta redacted company mentioned in emails

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Sergeant Schultz routine continues. Funny, I watched a clip from *Compass* this morning with John Jeffery had you there at an announcement with Carta.

The 2011 email reads: This company will be in PEI meeting Simplex on November 3rd. They want to meet with someone on moving their company to PEI.

Chris LeClair was the only government official in the know on these guys.

Question to the minister: Will you admit today that Carta is the mysterious, the redacted company that came from the surviving emails we tabled earlier this week?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: Oh, I remember now.

Mr. Roach: I never saw any emails that had anything to do with that company. I was aware that that company came to PEI, a tech company. Other than that, that's all I was aware of, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Oh, you're aware of it now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One question ago he didn't know who Carta was. Now, he recalls them coming to PEI.

I want to help jog his memory along here because Chris LeClair leaves government right about that same time. Now, the Minister of Finance comes in and announces Carta is moving to PEI and to the Atlantic Technology Centre.

Minister: What business exactly was Carta in, again?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess perhaps on the first question, I didn't hear exactly the name of the company –

Some Hon. Members: Oh.

Mr. Roach: – but I do recall the company.

I was simply request to go to the opening of the company. I was – my information at the time it was a tech company and that's why it was going over to the ATC centre because there were other companies over there, as well.

That's it, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Carta is a financial services company specializing in payment and loyalty cards. In short: they are a financial transaction hub company.

In fact, the company represented at the minister's, this minister's press conference told the media, and I quote: The company is also working with a client to regulate the off-shore gaming industry in Canada.

Question to the minister, it's kind of hard to divorce yourself from the truth here now, today. Will you resign today over this new Carta email that we found?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The question is no, I will not resign today. That was a company that came to PEI. I was aware it was a tech company. That was the end of it, Mr. Speaker, nothing behind that.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the Premier: Premier, can you confirm to this House today whether or not Chris LeClair and the Jenkins' were all shareholders in Carta international?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I have no knowledge of the company –

Mr. LaVie: Does anyone know what's –

Premier MacLauchlan: – or its shareholders and –

Mr. LaVie: – going on?

Premier MacLauchlan: – to pick up on the point I made in response to the earlier question about events from, now, six years ago. We've been in government for two years.

Mr. Myers: Ten.

Mr. MacEwen: Ten long years.

Premier MacLauchlan: We've been bringing forward a program of prosperity, of serving the people, of growing the economy, of expanding the services and programs –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: You had your chance (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – for the people of this province, and Mr. Speaker, we'd be happy –

Speaker: Order, order!

Premier MacLauchlan: I'd be happy, Mr. Speaker, to tell this House more about what we're currently doing in the current term of this government, but the opposition seems to want to continue to go back –

Mr. LaVie: It's not working for you (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – even further in time. Now we're back into 2011. Let's talk about the present and let's talk about the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: I will not be told by some rich man from Covehead who never worked a day in his life what I can and can't ask in this House. I'm standing up for Islanders in this House, and how dare he question me for what questions I ask in this House?

Speaker: Hon. member, you're – I'd call that a personal attack, so just – let's just settle down.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Finance minister resignation over e-gaming file (further)

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let's go back here; the Carta International gets called in with Chris LeClair, who had been asking the Minister of Finance to provide intimate details about an MOU; intimate details about an MOU being asked of the finance minister.

Then Carta comes in. Chris LeClair leaves government, partners with Carta, and then somewhere along the line somebody invented a cancer patient.

Question to the Premier again: Why won't you make this finance minister resign for what he has done to the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island and this very House?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I asked the Minister of Finance to take on his duties as the Minister of Finance on May the 20th of 2015, and the minister has brought in, since that time, three budgets. The economy has grown to the point where it's third in the country. We've got a balanced Budget. We've got great leadership in the financial administration in this province and in the leadership of our economy.

The Minister of Finance has my total confidence, and we're very confident about what we're offering the people of this province as we move forward with prosperity and with a vision and with the ability to work together, and we're proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If we want to go back and talk about this, back when Chris LeClair decided he was going to leave government, back when he decided with the Jenkins boys that they were going to take all of this in and they were going to make all the money even though the Minister of Finance had an MOU with CMT.

So CMT comes along, and they actually want to do the work because they've done all the work and they weren't going to allow somebody to take it from them and just take their idea and run with it and make all the money.

Carta comes along, gets introduced to Chris LeClair by CMT. Chris LeClair tries to partner with them and steal the business from government.

Government decides that they're going to invent a cancer patient to discredit CMT.

Question to the minister – or the Premier again: Premier, why don't you see fit, with all these things that you guys have done, with all these things that your government has done, inventing cancer patients and such, why won't you make this finance minister resign today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's always interesting when the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters rises on his questions and makes a lot of accusations, and I think if you take the time to read through –

Mr. Myers: You not read the *Globe and Mail* article (Indistinct) –

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, do I have the floor still?

Speaker: Yes you do, go ahead.

Mr. Roach: Okay, thank you.

If you take the time to read the emails that he's referring to that I somehow have some sort of under scheme involvement with Mr. LeClair, there's nothing like that anywhere in those emails; nothing like that at all.

I have no intentions of resigning. I'm working very hard at my job. I have been given a mandate by the Premier.

Ms. Biggar: Balanced Budget.

Mr. Roach: We're driving our economy. We're leading the country in almost every aspect of economics.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: That's what this government is striving to do. That's what the people of Prince Edward Island expect us to do.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct).

Mr. Roach: And that's what we're going to continue to do, so buckle up.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]