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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

WEDNESDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2018



Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During Question Period yesterday the Member from Borden-Kinkora asked a number of questions in regard to increases to things like driver's licenses and he cited that there had been increases since 2012. He might want to go back and get some new staff up there to check his facts because I'll give you the fact –

**Mr. R. Brown:** Fake facts.

**Ms. Biggar:** – is there's been no increases to fees, registrations et cetera since 2012.

I can tell you what we have given Islanders, is a \$10 million rebate on our electricity, and what the Greens want to do and the PCs want to do, is –

**Mr. R. Brown:** Shame.

**Ms. Biggar:** – increase taxes –

**Mr. LaVie:** We didn't ask for a statement.

**Ms. Biggar:** – by \$47 million with their carbon plan.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** I thought she was going to apologize again.

**Ms. Biggar:** Check your facts.

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

Questions by Members

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you very much, Ms. Speaker.

Two weeks ago, one of the largest private landowners in the province appeared before a legislative committee to argue for increased land ownership limits.

**Land ownership limits on PEI**

My first question is to the Premier: Premier, do you agree with Robert Irving that land ownership limits need to be loosened here on PEI?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that that question was raised before the Standing Committee on Communities, Land and Environment and that the committee has taken that matter under consideration.

But, I have to say it's the first that I had heard of it when I read about Mr. Irving's presentation to the committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It's unfortunate that the Premier just couldn't simply answer the question, yes or no.

That legislative committee also heard from several farm groups concerned that our current land ownership limits are being evaded by large corporate interests.

**Evading of land ownership limits**

Question, again, to the Premier: Premier, do you support increasing land ownership limits beyond what presently exists?

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.* was brought in in 1982. It was Prince Edward Island's answer to the debate at the time of the Charter of Rights being established here in Canada and we, as a province, wanted to protect land for all Islanders, and we will honour the spirit and the legal texts of the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The *Lobbyists Registration Act* passed last year by this House and has yet to come into effect.

**Disclosure of meetings re: land ownership limits**

Question to the Premier: Will you proactively disclose all meetings you or Cabinet have held with Cavendish Farms or its representatives about loosening land ownership limits here on PEI?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that the *Lobbyists Registration Act* is in the process of being brought into effect and that the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General is taking steps for that to be the case and that there are various measures involved in that being implemented. I expect that we will all be learning as we go forward what's involved in complying with that act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. LaVie:** Here we go.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A couple weeks ago the Irvings had presented to a committee and they weren't very forthcoming to MLAs. As a matter of fact, Robert Irving ran off before he could be asked any questions.

The Minister of Communities, Land and Environment; however, did reveal that Irvings had made a secret proposal to this government.

**Secret proposal from Irvings to government**

Question to the minister: What is this proposal and what exactly is the secret that you don't want to disclose to Islanders?

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think the secret proposal was outlined by the Irvings in their presentation. They want land limits to increase, and I think they want – the presentation itself was around deep-water wells and they want the Government of Prince Edward Island to override that legislation and that's not going to happen, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, another big secret that this government has is the actual regulations that go along with the *Water Act*. As you recall, the Leader of the Opposition asked for an all-parties committee who would take care of the regulations to make sure that it was done in a very fair and open, transparent manner and that's something that this government has refused to do.

Question to the minister: Why is it that people like Robert Irving get to make secret proposals to your government?

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, the Cavendish Farms plant is a major plant here on Prince Edward Island. Agriculture is the number one industry here on Prince Edward Island and that's why this government has initiated studies and want public input and public comments on farmland here on Prince Edward Island.

Other countries are losing farmland, losing vital production. We have to protect our farmland and that's why we are going out to consultation with our agriculture community and with Islanders across Prince Edward Island to see what Islanders want and demand of us, their government, in terms of land ownership.

We need this land for agriculture uses. If we don't have agriculture, a major part of our economy would be destroyed.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It seems funny to hear anything from this government talking about protecting agriculture when an entire part of Kings County is completely swallowed up by the Monks and the member from Montague won't even let them come to committee to let them explain what it is that they're doing with the land, and you guys are all letting it happen. It seems really funny that you won't stand up for agriculture. It seems really funny that you won't leave hands in the hands of young farmers who could actually farm the land for many other generations, and doing it all in secret and being blocked by one of your members.

Question, then, on the *Water Act*: Why are you so eager to rig the process against all Islanders and allow big interests like the Irvings to have a seat at your table and no one else?

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I want to say that the Irving company is a major company here on Prince Edward Island. One of the reasons we were able to meet our environmental targets in 2010 was the Irvings' commitment to the environment and especially in terms of when they brought compressed gas to Prince Edward Island to replace Bunker C oil, when they had the bio-digester put in place that saved millions of litres of oil.

The Irvings have stood up and protected the environment here on Prince Edward Island, and they are a major employer here.

As for the *Water Act* and the *Water Act* regulations, they're being developed now. They will be sent to the committee. The committee will review them before Cabinet reviews them and make a recommendation to the public.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So we all know that the Irvings have a really powerful lobby when it comes to being able to lobby this government. The minister gets up and he talks about the fact that the Irvings have saved us from needing the carbon tax because of all of the things they did.

### **Government money to avoid carbon tax**

Question to the minister: How much government money went into these things that Irvings have implemented to save us from a carbon tax?

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I must say that I meet with people all across Prince Edward Island, one of the groups I've been meeting with most regularly right now is the NFU. They have an opinion, and we sit down basically, once a month or every second month, to go over the progress of what we're doing here on Prince Edward Island.

We are meeting with the PEI Federation of Agriculture, and I'm proud to announce that we are signing a deal with the PEI Federation of Agriculture to study farm practices here on Prince Edward Island and how they become more sustainable and environmentally and fix climate change.

We are working with anybody that wants to work with government that has the interest of the environment first. We will continue to meet with each and every person in order to make our environment great.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So there you have it folks. The Irvings who saved us from needing the carbon tax was actually done with your tax dollars, and not

even a thanks. The minister had a chance to actually thank taxpayers for putting the money forward and he chose not to.

Irvings get to have a special seat at the Liberal table when it comes to making policy in Prince Edward Island, especially when it comes to dealing with our water; it's something that we all should be worried about.

While people from Miscouche or Martinvale don't get that same ability to sit at the table and have their concerns heard by this minister.

### **Meetings with Cavendish Farms and Irvings**

Question to the minister: How many meetings has government had with the Irvings and Cavendish Farms to discuss their secret proposal?

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The member asked earlier about how much Irvings were given for their plants. I'll tell you right now every dollar that was loaned to the Irvings was paid back in full – was paid back in full interest. The Georgetown Shipyards – I think the Province of Prince Edward Island has made millions of dollars in interest on that alone. That money went into schools and health care.

Irvings pay their debts, and they pay their interest also.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's funny you should bring up the Georgetown Shipyard – that's something that you and the Irvings both abandoned and left the people in King's County without work when it was something that they have relied on for years and years and years.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** You want to talk about the shipyard; you should be embarrassed to bring up the shipyard because of what's happened under your watch to the shipbuilding industry here in Prince Edward Island.

Robert Irving told the media after the committee meeting that his company is now in talks with government trying to find a way to make sure we can have a collaborative plan to manage water use on Prince Edward Island.

### **Irvings and water usage on PEI**

Question to the minister: Will the government answer exactly what Robert Irving and his company are doing dictating government policy on water usage here on Prince Edward Island?

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** I want to thank the member for the question. It's a great debate we're having here in the Legislature.

You have to understand, we want to grow the economy here on Prince Edward Island and we want to do it environmentally sustainably. A company comes in here and wants to create jobs here on Prince Edward Island, wants to create economic development here on Prince Edward Island, and they also want to talk about how they can do it in the best sustainable, environmentally friendly way.

What's wrong with companies coming forward with proposals in order to grow the economy, grow jobs here on Prince Edward Island and do it in an environmentally sustainable way? Why should we not sit at the table with these companies as we sit with any farmer or any company that wants to come here to Prince Edward Island?

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As you know, it's 'Take Your Kids to Work Day' today, and we were delighted to have a

large group of students in our office this morning and around lunchtime. We thought what better chance to tap into the young minds of our future, and maybe get them to help us out today.

So with your indulgence – I know this isn't convention – but we're going to bring up – we asked them what issues they thought should be brought forward and we're going to have a few lines of questioning with that.

### **Safety of students on bus routes**

So with that, a question to the minister of education: Matthew goes to Kinkora Regional High School and he's got concerns with the safety of students getting off – on and off the bus. We know that's been a hot topic. Matthew wants to know if your department is trying to change bus routes to make sure students get on and off the bus on the side of the highway that their home is on.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The short answer to that is yes. The further answer is there are actually a couple of bus routes where that change has been made by the Public Schools Branch already this year.

Certainly, I know that I have worked with the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, and I know that the Public Schools Branch has, to have busing routing issues sorted out. We have even made an investment – or I should say the Public Schools Branch has with our help – in new software to best enable them to plan for bus routes this year.

I thank you for that question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, Minister.

I hope you follow-up especially in that area as well, because it seems to be a problem and I know they're working hard at it.

Tonisha from Montague is in a class of 30 students, and there's other classes in that school that have 35 and approaching 40 different people in their classes.

Now we know when this government came to power in 2015, one of the first acts was to try and cut teachers. We stopped it, we were able to get that done, and now since we've seen some new teacher investment. I'm not sure if it's going to all the schools.

### **Staffing issues in rural schools**

Question to the minister of education: Tonisha wants to know what our government is doing to help staffing issues, especially in rural schools.

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

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

Another great question.

I'm proud to be here on my feet today to say that over the last 12 months we've added 150 frontline staff to the staffing compliment across Prince Edward Island.

We have a large number of staff going into student well-being teams. We have a large number of staff that are dealing with class composition issues. We have a large number of EAs that have been hired. We have a very in-depth psychology plan that we have rolled out to help get caught up in an area where there was tremendous need.

I would recognize that classroom composition is a tremendously complex issue. It's not an issue that pertains just to numbers, but really how those break down in the classroom. We're working everyday to do what we can to make the lives of teachers and students better.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Nathan from Souris is with us here today, and his father is a lobster fisherman in North Lake.

**Completion date for North Lake bridge**

A question to the transportation minister: Nathan would like to know when the new bridge in North Lake is going to be complete?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's a great question – one that I've heard many times in this Legislature.

We've had discussion with the community in that area, and we are looking at all options on how we can make improvements to North Lake bridge.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well Nathan, that's the same answer I got for the last seven years now.

**Some Hon. Members:** [Laughter]

**Mr. LaVie:** Going on seven years now.

**Issues of split classes in school system**

Question to the education minister: Connor from Souris told us about the issue of being in a split class. Connor talked about it being hard for the teachers, because they have to make two lesson plans and teach two lessons. What are the current rules around split classes and what's being done to reduce the number of split classes?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

This is a great question, because educationally, split classes actually can be beneficial depending on the circumstances.

I will say, actually, my son is in a split class this year – Kindergarten – one French Immersion Class and his teacher is, just after finishing her Master's, in split class

education. My wife's taught split classes as well.

Basically, if there's support for a split class and it's appropriate in terms of class composition and in terms of the age and stage, then a split class can be a great thing. So, we're not trying to eliminate them or reduce them.

It is kind of a new area in education and certainly we're doing what we can to ensure that the teachers are supported where they're needed.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My final question is from Jonah from Souris Regional School: Most students have cell phones and devices and they're often used to communicate with friends, family, and members by text, Snapchat and Instagram.

Most teachers ask them not to have their devices out during class time, but on breaks and lunchtime they would like to be able to use their phones.

**Open access WiFi in classrooms**

Question to the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture: Jonah wants to know, does your department have any plans to install open access WIFI for students and staff?

**Mr. Fox:** Yes.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The answer in short is yes to that question.

We have spoken about this in this Chamber before, we expect that there will actually be a program that will be up and running for teachers probably in January of this year, at least in select sites with a fuller roll-out as the year progresses.

This as we are all aware, required the installation of a firewall which is nearing completion at this point in time and will be ready to test after that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018, the province announced a new 260-bed residence would be built at UPEI.

This is great news given that there were no action items to specifically support students in the recently launched housing action plan.

### **New residence for UPEI**

A question to the Minister of Family and Human Services: What changed between the launch of the housing action plan in late August and the announcement of the new residence in October?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've been dealing with housing issues here for some time and we've been working diligently at it to come to some conclusions, make some decisions on housing.

There is a whole complex issue of housing and it wasn't born over night, it is something that has transpired for a number of years and our investments recently announced will ensure that we free up some housing on the 260 units at the university.

It supplements, hopefully, some of these students that are sitting in here today, but also supplements some of the students that want to stay and work and play in the Charlottetown and surrounding areas across Prince Edward Island when their school is finished.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. from Charlottetown-Parkdale, your first supplementary.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Considering the new residence was not in the action plan, I wonder where the funding will come from, what the provinces share of funding will be and when the funding will be committed.

### **Funding agreement for new residence at UPEI**

Can you table the funding agreement for this project?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Basically what we're going to do and you'll see it hopefully by the end of this week and some of it – it'll be \$12 million in capital budget over two years for construction.

Of government seniors and affordable housing units across PEI, \$4.7 million in capital budget for Summerside new construction of seniors and \$2.1 victims of family violence, short-term housing and 20 units of Beach Grove provincially owned.

Over the course, we are working on the funding resource right now with the University of Prince Edward Island, but it would be operational funding, because it's a partnership and there will be a three tier funding partnership from the federal, provincial and the university.

Thank you.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great.

**Speaker:** The hon. from Charlottetown-Parkdale, your second supplementary.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What's curious about this project is that the day before it was revealed that the province would be hosting the 2023 Canada Winter Games.

### **New residence re: athletes' village for Canada Winter Games**

Considering the haste in which the announcement was made and the lack of inclusion in the housing action plan, would it be fair to describe this residence as having less to do with meeting the needs of students and more to do with providing an athletes village for the Canada Games?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Well considering that I believe they announced that hopefully they're going to have it built by 2020 and the Canada Games are not until 2023, there's a variance in that.

Also we have a 24% increase in international – or 24% of total enrollment of the university is now international students who want to stay and work here and develop themselves into the culture and the fabric of Prince Edward Island, so that's very important I think the president Aziz came out and said that with enrollment continuing to grow and if you listen to Maclean's Magazine when they say we're bucking the trend in our universities and our post-secondary continue to grow because of the good programs that they offer here on Prince Edward Island – I think a new residence and expanding residence is only appropriate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Casey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Family and Human Services: Minister, you and I have had many discussions around the subject of tackling poverty and there is quite a buzz on the street about your recently announced poverty reduction action plan.

### **Tackling poverty in the province**

Can you explain some of the steps your department is taking to help those Islanders who need it most?

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

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank you for that question and we have had many great conversations.

Poverty is a pervasive issue and it is not unique to Prince Edward Island. Right out of the gate we knew that we were going to have to change the approach and discussion around poverty and we were going to need to mobilize Islanders – those including lived

experiences, our community partners, community as well as government to tackle the issue of poverty.

A year ago we formed a poverty reduction advisory council who are made up of just such people and on November 2<sup>nd</sup> of this year we released our poverty reduction action plan with 67 action items.

Poverty reduction council worked side-by-side with this government and engaged with over 400 Islanders and I'd like to take this opportunity if I may, to thank the poverty reduction advisory council and the 1,400 plus Islanders that lent their voices to this action plan and worked with government to develop it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms. Casey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, how does the poverty reduction action plan work with other government departments and initiatives?

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, poverty cannot fall on the shoulders of one department; we need government to be working collaboratively across government as well as with our community partners.

The poverty reduction action plan build on the great work that we undertook with the housing action plan.

It builds on the great work of the transformation of the disabilities support program to the new accessibilities support program. It builds on the senior's health and wellness action plan as well as the many initiatives my colleague and the minister of education has made through the early learning and childcare investments.

In my department alone we have made increases to both the wage exemptions and the asset exemptions for social assistance client – excuse me – who can now earn more money at the end of every month and keep more money in their pockets without any reduction in their benefits.

We also have provided them with \$750 transitional to work allowance as well as job coaching and life skills.

**An Hon. Member:** Great job.

**Ms. Mundy:** They can also keep their benefits, their medical, their dental and their optical benefits for up to two years post work. So we are well aware of the changes that we are making to our social assistance program so that we can allow Islanders to live with more dignity.

**Mr. Myers:** Put it in your blog; put it in your blog.

**Speaker:** You just went about two minutes over.

**Ms. Mundy:** Did I? I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I get carried away when I talk about the investments.

**Speaker:** Obviously you do.

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

**Ms. Casey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday in this house, the member from Charlottetown-Parkdale and I quote: We need to wait until fall 2019 and even 2020 before we will see these poverty reduction strategies money actually spent – end quote.

### **Poverty reduction strategy**

Minister: Can you tell us the facts?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services – 25 seconds.

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Unlike what the Third Party is leading Islanders is to believe, government is well positioned to invest – reinvest in Islanders and we have taken immediate action in doubling the number of rent supplements that we are providing to Islanders from 275 to 550 in addition to our fifth year of food increases in seven weeks we will be increasing our food allowances by an additional 10%.

In three weeks we will be increasing the shelter rates by an additional 6% and that's on top of the three percent that we increased them in June.

In seven weeks we will have a new child inclusion allowance of \$250 which will allow children of families on social assistance to partake in extra-curricular activities so that they can be with their peers, Mr. Speaker.

I'll sit down.

**An Hon. Member:** So much to do she can't even get it out.

**Ms. Mundy:** Can't get it out.

**Ms. Compton:** No more cutting us off, sorry.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Last spring, I asked you a question about the Montague Consolidated School. The school is a very important institution to all residents by area. The school is one of the oldest on Prince Edward Island. Given recent requests for new schools in other areas, it is acknowledged that this school is out of date and that this school needs to be replaced.

### **Replacement for Montague Consolidated**

Can the minister tell us here today if his department or the school board have plans for replacement for the Montague Consolidated School, and does he have the dollars budgeted in his management plan this year?

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

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

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

By way of update, I can advise the House that I did go down with the hon. Member

from Montague-Kilmuir and we took a tour of the school last spring –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** – and met with Mr. Carpenter and I believe it was the head of the home and school, Mrs. Myers.

**Mr. LaVie:** Seven and a half years, he finally asked –

**Mr. J. Brown:** We certainly are aware of the state of the school, which was built in 1971; the usage of the school and the issues that are there. The Public Schools Branch has recommended that there be some work done with that school, and through the capital budgeting process, we will be looking at that and other infrastructure.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, your first supplementary.

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can the minister advise the House that during that visit and the visit of other wards that went through that school, what your impressions were of the dated layout of that school? And your impressions for the need of replacement and what were your findings?

**Mr. LaVie:** He's not an architect.

**Mr. Myers:** He's hardly a lawyer.

**Speaker:** Can you do that in 25 seconds?

**Mr. R. Brown:** He's a Brighton lawyer.

**An Hon. Member:** Aw, no. That's not nice.

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

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

I do know my place, and I can say that I'm not an architect or any of those other things.

**Some Hon. Members:** [Laughter]

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** But what I can say is that our department has gone forward on the recommendations of the Public Schools Branch and we will work with the French Language School Board, as well. We have sought to get money made available to look at schools that are felt to need a look, such as Montague Consolidated School; we will hope to ensure that the infrastructure is in the best possible shape we can make it in and to reinvest our money in our school infrastructure.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** Thank you, minister.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, your second supplementary.

### **Structural assessment of Montague Consolidated**

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Part of my question last year had to do with the structural assessment of the school. I had asked that the minister collaborate with whom he felt necessary to do that structural assessment and I want to find out what the accommodations are currently and for future students needs, and when you can confirm that this replacement is included and funded for the fall budget of 2018.

**Mr. Myers:** You used to tell us we'd have to wait and see the budget.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

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

**Some Hon. Members:** [Laughter]

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** I think I heard the hon. member say 'touché'.

In any event, as I indicated, first thing is first – we are looking to have money made available to actually have experts look at Montague Consolidated School. It's not only to see when something would be done, but

what would be done, whether than might be a renovation, or whether that might be a complete school. Those are the kinds of things that have to happen through a process that is set out in legislation right now, that we have seen take place, recently in Charlottetown and in Stratford. I expect we will see that as the Public Schools Branch has already indentified Montague Consolidated School as one of the schools it is looking at.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Thank you, minister.

**Mr. Roach:** (Indistinct) of information.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also have some student questions. These students also talked about all of the positive things happening in their schools; Tonisha from Montague talked about the strong band program that Montague Intermediate School, led by Jonathan McInnis, their program is one of the best across the province.

### **Best practices amongst Island schools**

Question to the education minister: how do you ensure that schools have an opportunity to share ideas and best practices with other schools in the province?

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

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

This is a great question. This is a question that I have been waiting for somebody to ask.

Through the new structure, we a relation to education in this province, there's a perfect opportunity for information to be shared between schools, between areas of the province, and between different educational authorities, such as the Public Schools Branch, the department, and the French Language School Board. That happens through District Advisory Councils, through the Principal Advisory Council, through the

Learning Partners Advisory Council, through the home and school – who all share information through the different levels of government.

The Learning Partners Advisory Council that essentially is a public body that reports the public's recommendations. We have really seen this come to fruition and is really starting to pay dividends.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We also learned today that some math classes in the province are still waiting for new textbooks for classes that started in September.

### **Receiving textbooks on time**

Question to the minister of education: Will you commit today to getting someone from your department to work with these schools to make sure that these students get their textbooks as soon as possible?

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

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

There is no question that curriculum renewal is one of the most important parts of our education system. We have found that time and time again, and through our assessment program, we have been able to focus on areas of the greatest need. Our math programming has been one of those areas. This year is yet another example of great investments that we have made in our math curriculum, particularly at the intermediate level. Certainly, we will be working to update the curriculum materials that we have at that level.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We also heard that some French schools are having troubles recruiting qualified Francophone teachers to fill positions at our French language schools.

### **Recruitment of French teachers**

Question to the minister of education: What recruitment efforts were being made to ensure qualified French-speaking teachers are filling vacancies at our French schools?

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

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

As I have indicated previously, we work closely with the different education authorities, such as in this case, the French Language School Board.

I can tell you that UPEI has a great French language education program that we have worked with them in relation to Ron MacDonald, the Dean of Education, is actually on our Learning Partners Advisory Council. It is certainly an issue that we are well aware of, and it is one where we are going our utmost to try and sort out and it is an issue that the teacher's federation, who we have been working with, has made important, as well. That's all to say that its work that takes a concerted effort on behalf of everyone, to try and get there with.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another topic that we talked about with the students was bullying. It was a pleasure to hear that some of the students were saying: You know what, it seems to be pretty good in amongst the classrooms and the schools, but it definitely spills out into after class and outside of school, especially with technology, with the phones and all that kind of thing.

### **Training for teachers on bullying**

One thing we talked about and I would like to ask the minister of education is: What are we doing for our teachers when they know

things are happening outside of school, but then it boils over into school, with the bullying. Do we have any training, or any advice, or are we helping the teachers deal with those situations where they know that it's happening, whether it's in the communities or the rinks – wherever it is – and then when it boils into their classrooms. Is the minister aware of anything that is going on?

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

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

This is another great question.

We should bring students to work every day –

**Mr. LaVie:** You do, we talk to you here every day.

**Mr. J. Brown:** One of the primary reasons why we have taken an initiative such as the student well-being teams. We have seen the great impact that they've had.

We've also invested very heavily, between my two departments, in youth outreach workers, who are actually embedded in the schools, who are working elbow to elbow with the teachers, the students, and the guidance councilors to be able to determine where those issues are. They help to support the students, the teachers, and the families, to learn what's right.

We are doing that through handle with care programming and different family-oriented programming that we have that is being delivered by community partners as well. We value those partnerships, and believe that is the real way to get to the root of the issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We also talked about – we mentioned earlier about technology in the classrooms and whatnot. We talked about some of the dangers that are out there, as well, in the

online world, whether you are playing Fortnite, or just with the bullying on the phone, or anybody can access it or reach out now; grade nine are pretty responsible. We know in our younger years that you're not always – you're probably excited to engage with people online and that kind of thing.

### **Programs for protection of young children**

Is there any programs in our school system that helps teach our kids at a young age the dangers, because every day there is something new that's coming out and it's hard to keep up with whatever it is – is there programs in school to teach the kids to protect themselves against any of the dangers in the online world?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, there are numerous programs that do this. We've invested tremendously in technology over the last number of years, to the point where we now have a great number of Chromebooks in the classrooms that the students work on just about every day and through that there becomes a digital citizenry expectation. Working with our digital committee, the teachers have gone through programming – or starting to go through programming that is related to understanding just those difficulties. It's not just in that, but it's in research and understanding what a reliable source is and what you need to watch out for in today's day and age.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, your final question.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My final question today is something that has been brought forward to me by some of the community groups in our area. I understand that when some of these community groups host fundraisers or enter into the school they have to pay a rental fee. Now, we know you pay your janitorial staff for their time but there's a separate fee, I

think it's about \$50 an hour or there's varying rates depending on what it is. I understand it's a pretty small amount in the scheme of things and I understand it goes back to the school board.

### **Rental fees from school fundraisers**

Has the minister ever thought about that fee going to the actual school, maybe to go to a breakfast program or – it's only a few hundred bucks a year. Maybe you could top up something minor rather than going into the bigger system.

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

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

This is also a great question.

Just to be clear, it's the Public Schools Branch or the French Language School Board that administers those and makes those decisions. My understanding, from my last conversation with Mr. Grimmer, which was actually only about two weeks ago in this regard; was that they try not to charge the fee.

So, particularly weeknights where there would be janitorial staff, as an example, in the schools they'll often forego the fee. But, if it's on a weekend where they have to pay somebody to come in to open and close the doors and to ensure that the classrooms are left in a state that'll leave it ready for good education to take place on Monday morning, then they do charge the fee.

I think, actually, the fee for a weekend is \$108, which is pretty reasonable in my mind. I know they try to be as judicious as they possibly can be, but there are certain requirements written into our collective agreements with the unions, where if somebody's got to come in they do have to charge that time out.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[End of Question Period]