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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

WEDNESDAY, 11 APRIL 2018



Reponses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

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

**Mr. Myers:** Let's do some fishing.

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

We know that recruiting doctors and nurses in rural communities is definitely a challenge and that puts a greater pressure on our existing health care workers in those communities.

**Addressing risk to health professionals at KCMH**

My first question is to the health minister: Minister, what's being done to address the risk of burnout for health professionals working at the Kings County Memorial emergency room?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I alluded to earlier this week in other questions about Kings County Memorial Hospital just about how vital the service of that hospital is to the region of Montague and surrounding areas of all Kings County.

Obviously, the doctors, the nurse practitioners, the frontline nurses, all play a really important role in providing that health care service that is much needed in that area. Obviously, I think when it comes to the area of the ER, which has come to the forefront lately, although, we have a full complement of doctors down there for the first time in some time, which is very encouraging and very uplifting, there are times, from time to time, where there needs to be a revisit of ER care, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

We have a great team of doctors, nurses and support staff working at the Kings County Memorial Hospital now. But, they are carrying a very heavy load, due in part to limited access to family doctors and walk-in clinics.

**Number of hours available to walk-in clinic**

Question again to the minister of health: How many hours a week of walk-in clinic services are available in eastern PEI?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Certainly, there was extra attention drawn to this issue this week from an article that was posted in *The Guardian*. I believe it was on Tuesday of this week.

Obviously, the doctors that provide the service in the ER are finding it challenging. I think it's imperative that we look at all options to provide ER service and keep the doors open in Kings County Memorial Hospital.

Those are areas in such things as splitting the hours between doctors for the ER to remain open. It's also the use of NPs in that area if they can provide the role in any way shape or form.

We should also look at areas such as the type of sickness or injury you have, and if it could be revisited at a later time tomorrow. And, as well, other measures that may become available, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Walk-in clinics access in Kings County is very limited and quite often unpredictable.

**Availability of walk-in clinics in Montague**

Question again to the minister of health: Why are there no walk-in clinics in

Montague that could help address and alleviate the demand and the pressures on the emergency room at the Kings County Memorial Hospital?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Currently, as I said earlier, we are at, now, a full complement in that Kings County region. We are so pleased about that. But, from time to time, as I said, we do have challenges in our ERs.

There are things that we are looking at. We are looking at splitting the shifts of the doctors. It's probably time that we should take a very firm look in that area of walk-in clinics. I think they provide a very vital service in other areas; in Charlottetown and Summerside and other areas and we can work with doctors to see if that's something that they would be interested in working on.

We know we are going to fall short in our ER a little bit later this week. We're looking at all options to keep that ER open and sustainable and functioning.

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

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

The fact is, is that this week there is only 25 hours of walk-in clinics for all of the residents living east of the Hillsborough Bridge with no evening clinics, at all, in Kings County.

That leaves residents with little option but the emergency room at the Kings County Memorial Hospital for their health care needs.

Again, question to the minister of health: Wouldn't establishing an evening walk-in clinic in Kings County help relieve some of the pressures that have been placed upon the emergency room at the Kings County Memorial Hospital?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Currently, at full complement in the Kings County area, that allows a rotation of one in eight for each doctor. Obviously, that is a long shift of 14 hours. I know that's difficult for doctors to do. The area –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Mitchell:** – of split-shifting is an option.

Yes, indeed, I've already suggested that looking at, now, walk-in clinics in that area could be a very viable service. We will put full effort into looking at if that's an opportunity. If we have doctors available to man the walk-in clinic, or nurse practitioners.

We have a new nurse practitioner going to the Kings County area, which will also support the health care needs in that area. We'll look at any others that can be provided, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I'd like to draw attention and congratulate the frontline health care workers at the Kings County Memorial Hospital, who have come up with some very proactive ideas to improve the situation for their patients and to avoid staff burnout.

**Mr. LaVie:** Not listening.

### **Timeline approval from Health PEI**

**Leader of the Opposition:** My question to the minister: What's the timeline for Health PEI to approve the changes being suggested by these staff?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. LaVie:** Not listening.

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

This is certainly work that we will take on very diligently. We will do what needs to be

done to see if this is a viable option and move that forward.

Obviously, we are faced with a situation tomorrow in the ER in Montague, and we've notified the community. We've notified the mayor about a situation that will cause an ER shortage tomorrow. We are –

**Mr. LaVie:** Somebody else in your seat.

**Mr. Mitchell:** – working with others, still, to see if there are opportunities for doctors to field those hours. But, unfortunately, occasionally, doctors need the time off, and in that case it's about patient safety. We will be providing QEH with this information so that there are other opportunities for people to be dealt with for their health needs, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

At the November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016 Public Accounts meeting, a motion was passed to call more witnesses with key knowledge of the e-gaming file; the Member from West Royalty-Springvale voting in favour of that motion.

At the next committee meeting a week later the motion was reversed by the government majority. The Member from West Royalty-Springvale was replaced by the now Deputy Speaker.

#### **Member asked not to attend PA meeting**

Question to the Premier: Who ordered the Member from West Royalty-Springvale to stay away from that committee meeting? You, your chief of staff or Spencer Campbell?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, there has been a pattern in Question Period in the last several days of asking the Premier about matters that are not within my present knowledge in my ministerial role. I've always treated that as the purpose of Question Period. On this occasion, as I've said in others, it is not my role and it is not –

I do not make it my business to tell our committees, and notably Public Accounts –

**Mr. Myers:** You let Spencer Campbell –

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – what to do.

**Mr. Myers:** – run the show.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The Premier says he doesn't really know what happened with that meeting, or who met, but it's just a coincidence that the government members on that committee that voted that day to restrict witnesses happened to include the now Deputy Speaker, the now Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, the now Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning and the now Attorney General.

#### **Promotions given to members on PA committee**

Question to the Premier: Do you think it's a coincidence that the government members on Public Accounts who voted your way got promotions afterwards?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, there are many factors that go into people having various roles or assignments in Cabinet or in other regards and those decisions are taken on merit.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning moved the motion to restrict witnesses at Public Accounts.

#### **Attendance at meeting**

Question to the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning: Were you at the meeting with Spencer Campbell?

**Leader of the Opposition:** (Indistinct) see he's still directing it.

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

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

I'm going to start out by saying: I don't believe that I was at that meeting, but at the time I was caucus whip. I do want to say that I take extreme offense to the whole line of questioning that was started by the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, which is a breach of caucus confidentiality at its basis level and that's something that this House requires to function in the way that it should.

I would cite the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* and, in particular, page 34 of that in support of that. I would say, overall, that when we start looking at members that are there on particular days or are not there on particular days, we do our best to ensure that members are there at meetings and are present and are there to voice their own concerns on behalf of their own districts and to do the best that they can for Prince Edward Islanders. For that, we need to ensure that caucus confidentiality remains just that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I thank you for that answer, but I actually asked the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning: On that day, were you at the meeting with the lawyers? And the day that you moved the motion to limit witnesses you said, minister, and you were the one who moved the motion, in the report it says that: people who were in a conflict, what duty is it going to solve by bringing them in here and embarrassing them?

**Words spoken at PA meeting**

Question to the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning: Were those your words, the Premier's Chief of Staff's words, or Spencer Campbell's words?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member across, yes, I did say those words in that committee and you must put the context to what I said in that committee. The Auditor General had done a report, found no wrongdoing with these individuals, so why would we want to bring them in? That was my point at that committee meeting.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Involvement in decision of motion**

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

The point I'm trying to make here is: The week previous, we voted to bring in those witnesses, the next week, the hon. member from government at the time, who supported that motion, was conveniently absent.

Minister, you moved the motion. I want you to tell the House: Was Spencer Campbell involved in that decision?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

**Mr. Myers:** Lawyers start running numbers, it's time to go.

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As I indicated earlier, the Auditor General had indicated that she had interviewed these people and there was no reason to bring them in. It was just a witch hunt –

**Mr. Myers:** The auditor never said that.

**Mr. Gallant:** – on behalf of some committee members and I felt, at that time, there was no need to bring them in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

We're just trying to get answers on this side of the House, so maybe I'll go to another committee member at the time, the economic development minister. Were you in the meeting with Spencer Campbell?

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

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

I can tell you that I was at Public Accounts meetings – I was at lots of them and you probably have transcripts over there –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** Spencer wrote those.

**Mr. Palmer:** These are my notes and you probably have transcripts of those over there from the Auditor General and these are her words, not mine: For us to complete our work and issue the report, the work that we did was sufficient in terms of who we interviewed and the questions we asked.

**Mr. Myers:** Why did you need Spencer?

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

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

Well, we're going to quote here, so I'll quote that during the District 21 by-election, the minister of economic development said this about e-gaming at the candidates' debate: I, like all Islanders, am disappointed with the actions described in the AG's report. There were shortcomings and mistakes made – we all deserve better.

Question to the economic development minister: Didn't Islanders deserve better than you following orders from the

Premier's Chief of Staff and Spencer Campbell?

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

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

I think the results of that by-election did give Islanders a (Indistinct)

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

**An Hon. Member:** Sit down. That's it.

**Mr. Palmer:** Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the list of people that the Auditor General had interviewed, which everybody has access to. It was in the report. There are 56 names here and I'd like to table that, please.

**Mr. Myers:** Did Spencer write that for you?

**Speaker:** Yes. You can do that under Tabling of Documents.

**Mr. Myers:** Spencer's little caucus over there.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

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

Mr. Speaker, over the last week in the House, we've learned about some very disturbing developments around direct political interference in the work of the Public Accounts committee by the Premier's office.

#### **Political interference of PA committee**

Question to the Premier: Do you stand by your denials of political interference in the work of the Public Accounts committee as outlined by the Member from West Royalty-Springvale?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I have said on this occasion, I'll say it again: I do not participate in, or make it my business, to direct the affairs of the Public Accounts committee –

**Mr. Myers:** You've got high-paid lawyers to do it for you.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – we have great caucus members who represent their constituents, who work together, and they're doing a great job and that's how we work together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

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

What makes these developments so disturbing is that they are coming from an elected member of this House that served as a member of the Public Accounts committee and saw it happen first hand.

Are you suggesting that the hon. member from West Royalty-Springvale imagined these encounters with your Chief of Staff and lawyer Spencer Campbell, a former chief of staff, in the Premier's office?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Well, I will say, Mr. Speaker, and I said it yesterday, that the member from West Royalty-Springvale does indeed have an imagination. I said yesterday, and I will say it again, that the conversation that was reported in the front page of the media, where I was supposed to have said directly something to the hon. member about whether he would or wouldn't be in Cabinet, is not something that I said and I think anybody in this House or anybody with an ounce of sense about how Cabinets are made would believe that that was taking place three or four weeks – or two months almost – before I was even leader of the party.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Mr. Speaker, Spencer Campbell is involved with the government's legal defence in the \$50 million lawsuit against this province and your government on the failed e-gaming project.

### **Taxpayers' dollars and political interference at PA**

Question to the Premier: You were the Attorney General during this period. Were taxpayers' dollars used to compensate Spencer Campbell for running direct political interference at Public Accounts?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question. (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, that litigation is ongoing. It was started two to three years ago. Spencer Campbell, along with a colleague from his law firm, who I believe is the lead lawyer on that file, represents the province on that MOU, the CMT lawsuit – I don't think it's appropriate to call it the e-gaming lawsuit and I believe we're getting good service on that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

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

Spencer Campbell was the go-to fixer for the former premier, Robert Ghiz, (Indistinct) he's also the go-to fixer for your office. He figured prominently in the land expropriations for the Premier's Cornwall bypass. He also served as a central figure in the recent scathing Privacy Commissioner's decision about government violating the privacy rights of whistle blowers.

### **Dollars spent on e-gaming lawsuit**

Question to the Attorney General: How much has been spent to date in legal fees on this government's defence of the \$50 million e-gaming lawsuit?

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

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

I don't have the direct answer to that question with me here today, but I'll see what I can do to get that information and bring it back.

I should be very careful to note that this was a claim that was brought by Paul Maines who seemed to be pretty cozy with the opposition members across at all of those committee meetings that we were talking about here today, and they seemed to be taking their questioning, or their lines of questioning, directly from him.

So, I have a pretty big concern about where they were getting their instructions from at all of those meetings they were talking about.

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

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

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

**Contingencies in Budget re: unsuccessful in e-gaming lawsuit**

Question to the Attorney General: What contingencies were made in the budget for in the event that your government is unsuccessful defending this \$50 million lawsuit?

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

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

To answer the question directly, this sort of a thing is handled through a self-insurance fund called risk management for the province. They deal with those things and they ensure that there's a proper level of funding set aside for any of those contingencies.

But, I'll also point out that we have been down this road once before in court and that's not worked out too well for the plaintiffs in that particular case.

**Mr. Myers:** Did you read the auditor's report?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Beyond that, I'm not going to say too much about a matter that is before the courts right now.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) how can you prejudge a trial? You're the minister of justice. How can you prejudge a trial?

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we have to remember that Parliament must continue and we don't hide behind the defense of what's in the courts.

Spencer Campbell is directly involved in defending this government's \$50 million lawsuit. He was the 2011 Liberal campaign spokesman who peddled confidential, personal information of whistleblowers to local media; the leaking of which the privacy commissioner found breached the FOIPP act. The Premier issued a statement in response to the commissioner's finding stating: None of the key players are involved with his government. And stated: We do business differently. However, yesterday the Member from West Royalty-Springvale revealed that all during the e-gaming cover-up at committee, Spencer Campbell was coaching the government MLAs.

**Coaching of government MLAs for committees**

Question to the Premier: Do you consider this doing business differently?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the precise context, and I'll stand by it, in which I made those comments was in the aftermath of the report that appeared in *The Globe and Mail*. We called in the Auditor General. The Auditor General interviewed, was it 56 witnesses? She looked at 10,000 documents. She made 15 recommendations. All 15 of them have been implemented and in her most recent report, the Auditor General said she's satisfied with the follow-up on her recommendations.

So, we are doing business differently and we're moving on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

This government talks a lot about openness and transparency, but it's still strangely reluctant to table detailed documents to better inform debate in this House. Now admittedly over the past few years, government has been tabling more detailed breakdowns as we review budget estimates and that occurred last night as we were in the process of reviewing them, and much of this improvement has been the result of the official opposition's persistence in demanding this information and I thank them for that.

The official opposition has also suggested, and we in the third party have echoed that suggestion, that the budget estimate process would be even more transparent and effective if government provided all budget information in an electronic format.

#### **Electronic access to budget documents**

A question to the Minister of Finance: Will you commit to providing electronic access to budget documents?

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

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

It's nice to hear from the third party that we're actually being more transparent and accountable, and we appreciate those comments from the discussion we just had.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) in a bubble; in the Premier's bubble.

**Mr. MacDonald:** We've made significant progress toward greater transparency and accountability in the Department of Finance, and we're working with ITSS as we speak on consulting with them in regards to open data. There is a process in place and I have additional information on that that I can share with the third party, and I can bring it back to the House in that regard.

There was just a new contract awarded to a company that is actually working on that. So, we will be requiring the other departments to address these concerns and

get the information to ITSS so we can upload it and have open data more frequently and relevant to our government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Again to the minister: In the absence of this electronic information, would you commit to providing members with PDFs of all background documents, at least one clear sitting day before government plans to debate that department so that all members can be better prepared for that debate?

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

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

While the hon. member was asking a question, I did actually come across the name of the company and it was Socrata, and this is to establish a new open data platform for PEI. Work is underway to migrate and existing data sets, identify some new data sets. The new platform is available but in private mode while new data sets are being added, but the launch date for this new platform will be independent upon availability of the data sets.

So, we're moving in that direction. It's something that I've discussed with the hon. member –

**Mr. Trivers:** Give us the handouts early; that's what he wants to know. Will you give us the handouts early?

**Mr. Henderson:** (Indistinct) they were handed out.

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

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

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Yes, just to be clear, that's exactly what I was asking. I understand that we're not going to get any electronic format for these documents this

year, so can we be provided with a paper copy at least a clear day before the debates start so we can have a more effective and a more in-depth debate?

### **Tabling of detailed briefing documents**

I would like that not just when it comes to budgetary debates, but in the interest of openness and transparency and improving the quality of all debate in this House, would government also commit to tabling all detailed research and briefing documents, including, full jurisdictional scans and public feedback for any new legislation well in advance of second reading, as I requested at the end of the last sitting?

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** I think, Mr. Speaker, since this government came into power in 2015, we've made several great strides in becoming more transparent and accountable to, not only the House, but to the public of Prince Edward Island. There are all kinds of financial information presented on our websites, and this does take some time.

I had a discussion just the other day on open data because it's something that I have an interest in myself.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** We'll look forward to what more can transpire, but that's something that we can certainly look at prior to the House.

You've got to understand, too, that this is a government that is a huge government. Every time we decide that we're going to make a small change, to us in our minds it's a small change, but to many, it's the taxpayers that are paying for this and we have to consider that as a whole. So some of our decisions may take longer than what the opposition or the third party require. But, we are moving in the right direction.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

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

My question is for the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

As you may know, minister, organizations and businesses seeking federal funding to hire summer students must attest to the job and the organization's core mandate respecting human rights in Canada, specifically reproductive rights. This has led to concerns from some faith-based groups and individuals.

### **Reproductive rights and student summer jobs**

**Minister:** Is it possible that the province could provide extra funding to these organizations that are not comfortable signing this document?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

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

Thank you, hon. member, for that question.

As I know you're an advocate for the youth and our students in our province. My department offers many programs and just to name a few; we have the Graduate Mentorship Program, the Career Connect, post-secondary employment, and we also go a step further in the summertime and try to have employment for students and youth in Team Construction, Team Seafood, and Team Trucking.

Any organizations that want to contact my department, we are willing to help them with some of these programs.

I'd also like to add that in our recent budget we made it possible for over 1,000 low-income students, to get a free tuition on PEI to better their job searches into the future, and I'm very proud of that as a government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, your first supplementary.

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

Thank you, minister, and I will have those organizations contact your department.

Seasonal businesses thrive off of being able to hire summer students through government grants as it lowers their costs and it can allow students an opportunity to gain experience.

**Federal funding for summer student jobs**

Will the minister reach out to the federal government to address this concern, seek clarity on this issue, and ensure that this funding continues to flow into Prince Edward Island to help businesses, organizations and students?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

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

Hon. member, you know, maybe you don't know, our department works very closely with the federal department on programs that we could initiate to help students. We'll continue to do that. You know, in doing this we're very proud of our labour force survey that was released last Friday so that there's 2,200 more jobs here on PEI from this time last year.

It's great to invest in growth in our economy and we'll do whatever we can to help our Island youth get employment.

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, I remember when you were first elected, I particularly your first piece of advocacy work, at committee, was for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. There is not one member of the committee that you were on who doesn't – who didn't forget the emotional meeting where you introduced us to such grandparents, who were raising their grandchildren.

In December of 2017, you introduced a grandparent and care provider program to assist these grandparents who are raising their grandchildren.

**Update on grandparent and care provider program**

Can you give the House and update on this program?

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

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

Thank you for that question. I would be very pleased to bring an update. When the program rolled out in December, we had initially intended it to roll out in two phases; phase one to deal with the open protection cases. Phase two would be rolling out in April. But there was an overwhelming response to those caregivers, who were also providing care and safety to children in historical cases, so we expanded the program immediately.

Currently, we are providing help and support to the care providers. We are giving them \$700 per month, per child. In addition to child care, respite, they have a social worker dedicated to them. They also receive trauma-informed care for the children. We are continuing to learn and improve the program as we continue to roll it out.

Thank you.

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

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

**Number of grandparents and care providers receiving payments**

Minister, I'm glad to see the success of this program, but can you let us know how many grandparents and care providers are currently receiving payments through this program?

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

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

Again, I'm so very happy that government did act on this, and we are providing support now to over 100 children, and over 80 caregivers, including many of them are

grandparents. They are getting \$700 per month, per child in addition to respite. They are getting training, because raising kids today is hard, let alone raising your grandchildren. They are enrolled in parenting programs. We have child care subsidy for them, as well.

Over 100 children now, who are now safe. We are now helping the families that are providing them that safety.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Minister, there was some concern with CRA for the grandparents, who were receiving federal benefits.

#### **Concerns with CRA and receiving of benefits**

Is your department continuing to work with CRA for these parents, who are receiving your support?

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

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

Yes, our department is still working collaboratively with CRA, as well as the four MPs on Prince Edward Island. They're advocating on our behalf.

We have also sought expert tax advice from Grant Thornton. We view this program as an extension of our foster care program. None of the tax, the child care benefit that the federal government provides, as well, it is a non-taxable income on the foster care program. We view that the same as our foster care program.

We will continue to work with CRA to work through the issue, but we are providing help to the families and the caregivers that are providing help to those children.

Thank you.

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

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

We all know about the plight of the Mount Stewart school roof. This government finally issued a tender to replace the roof this winter. The community is very happy to hear that the tender has been awarded and will be done soon.

#### **Replacement of floor and roof at Mount Stewart school**

Question to the minister of education: Obviously, the amount of leaking that has been done over the past nine years has ruined the floor of the gym. Will the minister replace that floor at the same time they replace the roof?

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

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

As I said last fall when I asked questions about the roof, it's really up to the Public Schools Branch to look at capital priorities within their buildings and determine what their needs are and when they will be serviced.

However, I do happen to know that the Public Schools Branch was out to Mount Stewart school, as I believe the member is also aware, on Monday looking at that gym floor. I would anticipate that they are looking at the possibility of either repairing or replacing that floor.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The students and staff at Mount Stewart Consolidated School were told that the money is not in the budget to replace that floor. A couple of quick fixes have put some kind of a concrete-type substance in there, which the students are tripping over.

Will the minister commit to –

**Mr. LaVie:** Shame!

**Mr. MacEwen:** – absolutely replacing floor?

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

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, so I do want to address this in a bit of a different way first. That's to say that, as we discussed here last fall, we have a \$50 million capital improvement program set out for schools in this province. That includes \$2 million a year to be put towards capital improvements in schools in an ongoing basis. That's allocated between the Public Schools Branch and the French Language School Board based on the priorities that they set on an ongoing basis, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. MacEwen:** Mr. Speaker, there are gaping holes in the floor in the gym. Gaping holes. If there was a hole in the floor out there, if there was a hole in the minister's office, if there was a hole in our office upstairs, my own office, it would be fixed. There are gaping holes in the gym. I'll table the pictures of the holes.

#### **Priority of Mount Stewart school gym floor**

Why isn't it a priority? If there was a hole out there, it would be fixed within a week. Why isn't the floor of the Mount Stewart school's gym fixed right away?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

**Mr. Trivers:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I want to be very clear in how I'm addressing this question. What the hon. member across is asking me to do –

**Mr. Fox:** Fix the hole.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – is to interfere –

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** No, he's asking me to interfere in the Public Schools Branch's assessment of their own priorities.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** I did indicate that the Public Schools Branch was out there on Monday. They're looking at that floor with a plan to assessing and determining whether that floor needs to be replaced this summer –

**Mr. Myers:** They can't tell by looking –

**Mr. J. Brown:** – I expect –

**Mr. Myers:** – at a gaping hole?

**Mr. J. Brown:** – if it does, they'll do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. MacEwen:** Mr. Speaker, this is getting ridiculous. For Chrissakes, I was out there the –

**Ms. Biggar:** Oh!

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh!

**Mr. MacEwen:** – other day. I stepped on the floor and water came up through the floor in the middle of gym. I had to interrupt a badminton game for the kids, stepped on the floor, water comes up through the floor.

**Mr. LaVie:** That's a shame.

**Mr. MacEwen:** If that happened anywhere else, it would be fixed. There are kids jumping over the holes in the gym to play badminton.

Will you fix it right away?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

**Speaker:** Hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, I know you're getting pretty

worked up over what's going on, but foul language and using the name of our lord is very, very unparliamentary. I want you to withdraw that.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry. You're right. We're not at the Tracadie Wharf anymore. I take it back. I shouldn't have said that, but we've got kids from your district, from Tracadie, from Abegweit First Nation in Scotchfort, around Mount Stewart, around St. Teresa.

I was there the other day. The home and school has met. There was supposed to be a badminton meet today. They had to cancel it because they don't know if it's going to rain, or it's going to snow. There's water coming up from the floor.

I understand that there's a process in place and they're out there, but they keep getting told the same thing over and over: Oh, we'll see if it's in our budget. We'll try and fix it. We don't want to wait another nine years for this. Let's fix it at the same time. There's water coming up through the floor –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacEwen:** – it's not even from where it's leaking –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacEwen:** Please fix this right away.

**Mr. Trivers:** Common sense.

**Mr. LaVie:** You're in a bubble.

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

**An Hon. Member:** There's no question.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacKay:** He hasn't answered it yet anyway. Give him another go.

**Mr. Fox:** Make the phone call.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, I'm all right to talk a little bit more about the great capital program that we've got ongoing, if you wish.

**An Hon. Member:** Go for it.

**Speaker:** Yeah, go ahead.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I've indicated, each year there is \$2 million set aside for capital improvements within the Public Schools Branch and the French Language School Board. As I indicated, on Monday of this week folks from the Public Schools Branch were out at Mount Stewart school –

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** – assessing that floor.

That gym was built in 1976. It's had repairs over the past three and four years, and they will look at that floor and they'll determine whether it needs to be replaced –

**Mr. LaVie:** Answer the question.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – or repaired.

They are judicious in how they do that and I expect if they need to replace the floor, they will because the money is there to do just that.

Thank you.

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

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

The money is there to do just that in a lot of things. We've seen the special warrants. We see – I know for a fact your guys' leak upstairs here, that was fixed right away. That's not in a budget somewhere. That's not waiting for this long, drawn-out process through the board. You just say – this is the safety of the students. What do you think the unions would say if that was going on down at your department? What do you think they'd say if there was a hole in the floor when they walked in? It'd be fixed right away.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacEwen:** It's a safety issue. There's mould underneath the floor.

**Mr. Trivers:** Shame.

**Mr. Myers:** Show some leadership.

**Mr. Trivers:** Shame.

**Mr. MacEwen:** You can give me that bureaucratic answer, or you can say: Do you know what, member? I'll get it fixed. Say that.

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

**An Hon. Member:** Fix the leak.

**Mr. Trivers:** Fix the floor.

**Mr. LaVie:** What did the Premier tell you to say?

**Mr. Myers:** No leadership over there. Call Spencer Campbell.

**Mr. Mitchell:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct) question?

**Mr. Myers:** Can you ask Spencer Campbell if he'll fix it?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, if you would like to respond to the statement, go ahead.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Okay, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Fox:** It's not funny.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Perhaps, in the interest of time you'll beg my – I'll beg your indulgence.

As I indicated, we have a great capital improvement program ongoing. We have \$2 million a year set aside for the next five years for the Public Schools Branch and the French Language School Board to undertake projects that they deem to be priority to do just this.

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct) say the words.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Just yesterday we answered questions in this House about undertaking construction projects in schools –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) no leadership.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – at the same time the students being in there and we know that that's an issue, and the Public Schools Branch does as well. I fully suspect that when it's most convenient to have that floor fixed, the Public Schools Branch will do just that, as I've indicated about four times already this Question Period, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

[End of Question Period]