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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

THURSDAY, 12 APRIL 2018



Questions by Members

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

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

Many of our post-secondary students are the leaders of tomorrow. Groups like the UPEI Student Union have done a tremendous job advocating for students on issues that matter to them.

**Post-secondary institutions not covered under FOIPP**

Question to the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning: Why is it that your government does not believe that Island post-secondary institutions should be covered under the freedom of information act?

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

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

It's not that our government doesn't believe in the institutions being under the FOIPP. There's some consultation going on about that right now and the privacy commissioner recommends that that happens, so it is being discussed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

If this minister was serious about this issue, this very important issue, that's impacting our students here on Prince Edward Island – they've had many years to enact this legislation so that it covers our post-secondary institutions. PEI is the only province, the only province, not covering post-secondary institutions under freedom of information laws.

**Legal rights of Island students**

Question, again, to the same minister: Shouldn't Island post-secondary students

have the same legal rights as students in every other province?

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

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

As I indicated in my previous answer, there's discussion going on about this. There was a committee. One of the standing committees had made a recommendation to this, and it is being discussed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Again, I go back to this government has had ample opportunity to do the right thing and to make sure that post-secondary institutions fall under the same legislation as government departments do. It's clear government is content to let these schools self-police their own freedom of information policies; policies, I might add, that fall short of basic best practices.

**External oversight on freedom of information policies**

Question to the same minister: Why are you fine with no independent external oversight on how these policies will be managed?

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

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

As I'd indicated earlier, there is some discussion on this very topic going on. But, let me just say some things, some wonderful things that we've done in our recent budget.

We've made it possible so that 1,000 students can get almost free – well, they will get free tuition. We've put in place where they can get their loan forgiven by \$3,500 a year if they come back to PEI or they stay here in this province. We've given the institution a 2% increase.

We think we've done some wonderful things to help our students and as I indicated before, this FOIPP information for UPEI is in discussion and we'll see what the outcome is of that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Once again, this minister has failed to answer the basic questions that I've been asking. This government, again, has had ample opportunities to put this legislation in place, the same as all other provinces do across this great Country of Canada. But yet, they're falling short. They're talking about some initiatives that they're bringing in to support Island students studying here on PEI and I applaud that, but what we're talking about here is freedom of information.

Under these policies, Island students seeking information will be charged up to \$25 just to apply, and then be charged another \$40 an hour for processing the request. Similar fees under the FOIPP law for government records are \$5 for the application fee and \$20 an hour for processing.

### **Student fees for FOIPP requests**

Question to the minister: Aren't these fees excessive?

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

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

The student union did a great presentation to the committee and as I had indicated, we're still studying this. I can't say enough for the student union at UPEI. I meet with them on a regular basis and we have a meeting in the coming weeks.

Anything we can do to help them with their education and to help – we gave them \$25 a student to help with mental health. We're doing a psychiatrist course there for healthcare at UPEI. We're doing tremendous things, and I'm sure the folks from Holland College that are here in the gallery

understand some of the tremendous things that are happening, because they as well, can get part of the George Coles Bursary and the new advantage bursary that we came out with which increases that to \$2,200 a year for students in post-secondary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I'm sure the students that are here from Holland College today would agree that some of these initiatives that this government has finally brought forward are good initiatives. But, what we're talking about here, fundamentally, is openness and transparency. This government talks about it all the time, but they know nothing about real openness and transparency.

Total grants to Island post-secondary institutions in the 2018-2019 Budget are over \$100 million. That's taxpayers' money. None of the policies are retroactive so post-secondary students would have no way to obtain any information before 2017.

### **Premier's time at UPEI as president**

My question, again to the same minister: You signed off on these policies extremely quickly. Was that because you wanted to keep the shroud of secrecy over the Premier's time at UPEI as president?

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

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

We are committed to the consideration and consultation of municipalities and post-secondary institutions. With this public input and a review of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* – we've done that as a government. We've made ministers put their expenses online. We're accountable, and we're doing what we can.

As I indicated to the member opposite, we are working on this. Things don't happen

overnight. We're doing consultations. It's something we're working on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

This past last week we've heard a lot of problems with the physical conditions of our schools. We heard the member from Kensington talking about air quality in his school. We heard the member from Morell talking about leaky roofs in his school, and bad floors in his school.

### **Ministers last visit to Souris Regional High School**

Question to the minister of education: When was the last time you visited Souris Regional High School?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

**Mr. Myers:** When was the last time you crossed the Hillsborough Bridge?

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

**Mr. Myers:** There's not a wall there (Indistinct)

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

As we got into here, yesterday, I think I know where this question is going, so I'm going just remind the House; I've quite clearly outlined the procedure to talk about any capital issues that might be seen within schools, so I'll remind you, I can give you afterwards the telephone number for the Public Schools Branch if you want to call up and let them know that you think that you've got an issue –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** I will say that there has been a tremendous amount of investment. In fact, I think, in the last 10 years, your district has received 20% –

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** – of the capital investments in schools on Prince Edward Island.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) great MLA (Indistinct)

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

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

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

It's just not Three Oaks, it's not just Morell; myself and the leader visited the Souris Regional School. Clearly, the roof is leaking. Surprise; the roof is leaking.

### **Leaky roof at Souris school**

Minister: Are you aware of any roofs leaking at the Souris Regional School?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct) of everything.

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

In relation to the Souris Regional School, I think that's something I've just indicated, we put a tremendous investment into. Again, it's the Public Schools Branch that has the care – the charge of the care of our capital investments within this province. They have over 3.5 million –

**Mr. Myers:** Roof's leaking just like your support.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – square feet of school. We're certainly proud of the investment up there. I had heard that there may well be a little bit of water up there and we'll have the Public Schools Branch go take a look at that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

I'll let the minister of education know, it's a renovated school. For another \$4 million you would have had a new school. You would have had a new school with good roofs.

**Mr. Myers:** Hopefully.

**Mr. LaVie:** To the minister of education: Your new schools are leaking, your old schools are leaking, your caucus is leaking –

**Some Hon. Members:** Laughter.

**Mr. LaVie:** – why are student and staff forced to go to school with leaky roofs?

**Mr. Myers:** Better plug that caucus leak, though.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

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

If only we could get the Public Schools Branch to come deal with everything –

**Some Hon. Members:** Laughter.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – as I've said here a few different times we have a great capital improvement program ongoing. It's a program that we've set out over five years where we're going to spend \$50 million on capital improvements to –

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** – Prince Edward Island schools. That's an unprecedented level of investment in our schools. With that being said, we do recognize that we do have aging infrastructure. We do recognize that when –

**Mr. LaVie:** Aging? You just built it.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – there's new construction and –

**Mr. LaVie:** You just built it.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – we would think that new construction would be something that we'd be happy to see. When there is new

construction and there are issues with it, we will go back and take a look at what caused those issues and we'll have them remedied. We commit to doing that. It's the Public Schools Branch that has the responsibility for it.

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

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

This government likes to crow about a balanced budget. That's all we hear. That's all you'll hear this session: the budgets are balanced. It's all crow.

### **Balancing budget on backs of students**

Question to the minister of education: Why are you trying to balance your budget on the backs of our students of Prince Edward Island?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

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

I do find that statement to be a bit entertaining. Particularly, coming from –

**Mr. LaVie:** You find any statement –

**Mr. J. Brown:** – a member –

**Mr. LaVie:** – entertaining.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – who's going to see some students moving into a brand new school in his district just this weekend.

**An Hon. Member:** Wow.

**An Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Mr. J. Brown:** It might be five years ago that they moved into a brand new school across the bridge.

**An Hon. Member:** All right.

**Mr. J. Brown:** So, 20% of a pretty big capital investment is a lot of money going into the hon. member's district. I'd say,

overall, we have put more capital investment into our schools than we've seen in a long time in this province. We're proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Got him on the rope.

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

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

I've been elected for seven years now. I was elected to be the voice of the people. I had to fight for an ambulance. I had to fight for our dialysis. I had to fight for a school.

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah.

**Mr. LaVie:** I went to the feds for a French school.

**Mr. Myers:** Great MLA.

**Mr. LaVie:** We got to fight for everything in rural PEI –

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** Great MLA.

**Mr. LaVie:** We got to fight for everything in rural PEI and we shouldn't have it. We just want our share. We've got tax dollars up there.

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

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

**Mr. LaVie:** We got tax dollars.

**Leaky roof at Souris school (further)**

Will you commit today to fix the roof at the Souris Regional School?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question. Great MLA. That's how it's done.

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

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

I'm glad the hon. member brought up the fight that we go through here as members on the floor –

**Mr. LaVie:** You don't know what it's like –

**Mr. J. Brown:** – of this Legislature –

**Mr. LaVie:** You never (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** – I'm happy that in the time I've been in there, we've been able to fight and argue for and persuade in whatever way we can –

**Mr. LaVie:** You didn't have to fight –

**Mr. J. Brown:** – Cabinet and government to invest –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** – in education. We are seeing, with this Budget, that we have on the table here, now, an unprecedented level of –

**Mr. LaVie:** You should be ashamed of yourself.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – investment in education.

**Mr. LaVie:** You should be ashamed of yourself.

**Mr. J. Brown:** It's a level of investment we've not seen since kindergarten came in 10 years ago. It's an investment in the frontlines.

**Mr. MacEwen:** (Indistinct) teachers

**Mr. J. Brown:** This is something –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) firing teachers.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – I think that we can all be proud of, and it's something that, first and foremost –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** – will benefit Prince Edward Island's school children –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** – Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Mr. Speaker, in the fall of 2015, our caucus uncovered government's sales pitch brochure for financial service companies, which instructed them in Canadian tax avoidance. This Premier blamed the civil servant connected to the document and said: Management would never have sanctioned such a brochure. He said, quote: This is not how we do business.

### **Tax avoidance brochure for financial service companies**

Question for the Premier: Do you stand by this explanation given by your own office that day?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I stand by what we said on that occasion, which is that that is not the inducement or the advertisement that we make for Prince Edward Island for people, who will grow companies here, or who will invest here.

We've got a great workforce. We've got a growing economy. We've got very successful sectors and businesses from one tip of this province to the other. The only part that somewhat concerns me is the amount of time the opposition spends running down our good businesses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Mr. Speaker, question for the Premier: Premier, can you explain why a company, you currently own a significant stake in, hired the person responsible for the tax avoidance brochure directly from his senior government position in financial services to be their new CEO?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question. That's a good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the member will have to be more precise, I'm not sure what he's referring to.

**Mr. Fox:** Too many businesses (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

Let me clarify. The Premier owns a large stake in discoverygarden. This company was built and spun-off from UPEI while the Premier was in charge.

This person connected to the off-shore advice document was the government senior investment officer for financial services and gaming during e-gaming. This is a fact.

It's also a fact; the Premier's company hired him directly from this role to become their new CEO.

### **Premier's connection to discoverygarden**

Mr. Premier: Why is it that you know so much more and have much more direct ties to this file than you're trying to let on?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, obviously, doesn't understand the operation of our conflict of interest legislation under which I would have transferred any interests that I had at the time in any companies in our province and prior to that, I'm proud to say I did invest in Island companies and sought the opportunity to do so, but those interests would have been transferred to a trustee who's responsible for a blind trust and that's where the matter lies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Mr. Premier for confirming your investment.

This document on tax avoidance through offshore shells resurfaced earlier this week

when it was discovered that the Premier has personally invested in another company sheltering offshore in Bermuda. The Premier has hidden from this issue and refuses yet, once again, to come clean. When this controversial offshore document was brought to light in the House in 2015, senior government officials engaged this person again – the same person they say breached Innovation PEI policy. They emailed out to this person ostensibly to sharpen the talking points for the Premier.

Question to the Premier: If you didn't sanction the tax advice, why turn back to the same person for your speaking points to defend it?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, let me clarify one point that was raised in that long preamble about the part that I played in the company that he's apparently referring to and it was raised the other day. It's very clear, elementary, look at the disclosures that we make as members here and I make as Premier, that I did not have, at any point, an ownership stake in, I suppose the company that he's referring to, and that that interest, which was preferred shares, again obtained prior to getting into politics – at a time when my interest was to invest in Island companies and I'm proud of that – I disposed of and those do not appear on any disclosures that I made post 2015.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

I have the email chain here and I will be tabling it after Question Period.

Discoverygarden does archive and indexing services and their main customers are post-secondary institutions. In October, 2015, the Premier's office and the Premier invited a university president from Ontario down to tour discoverygarden and just in the last year, government appointed the Premier's private sector CEO to a paid board position, boosting the company profile and no doubt the potential for the Premier to make even

more money. Mr. Premier, you're the one that brought up conflict of interest.

**Abuse of office for personal financial gain**

Premier: Is this not abusing your office for the sake of your own personal financial gain?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I said before and it's very clear and clear on the face of the disclosures that are made that the interest that the member's now speaking about – he was confusing something earlier – but the interest that he's now referring to is in the hands of a trustee who looks after –

**Mr. Myers:** Still, you know you own it.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – the affairs that are in a blind trust, Mr. Speaker, –

**Mr. Myers:** You know you own it.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – and that's where the matter lies.

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

**Mr. Myers:** You're effectively funneling money into it. You know you own it.

**Speaker:** Hon. members, let the Premier finish his answer.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** And I'm sure that the promotion of the activities in our province in the information technology sector is something that Islanders would want. The Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, the Premier, and others – and I would hope members opposite – to encourage, and support, and want to grow that sector.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

It's been two years now since the Premier first initiated the debate on campaign finance reform and promised us new legislation. After backtracking on the commitment to ban corporate and union donations, this government committed in last fall's throne speech to, and I quote, "...put forward a discussion document on Campaign Finance Reform for consideration of all members and all sides of this Assembly."

### **Discussion document on Campaign Finance Reform**

It's been over five months since that announcement. When will the Premier table this discussion document?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, let me go back to the preamble of that question.

I did, indeed, bring forward a document for discussion. It was a letter addressed to the leaders of the parties – at that time, the acting leader of the official opposition. Not long after that, we went through some period of shifting sands, I shall say, during which I was asked to do one thing by the interim leader and then by the end of that period of consideration, there was a different position on the part of the same – well, of the official opposition anyway and I'm not sure about the then interim leader. That's the situation we've been dealing with and that's what we're still trying to deal with, but now that things are sort of settling down – if you might call it that – I think we'll be in a position shortly to have that discussion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I was unaware that the Premier always followed the advice of the Leader of the Opposition.

### **Introduction of campaign finance legislation**

Can the Premier tell us how long he expects this new process to take when this document

is tabled and, in particular, how long it will be before he is ready to introduce campaign finance legislation in this House?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Not only have we been dealing with what I called 'shifting sands' in terms of positions in this across the floor, but there's been – and members will recognize this – a lot of new ways in which people across this country are taking account of campaign finance issues, whether that's indirect contributions, which I think were expressed as a concern in the public during the plebiscite, or it might be some of the concerns that have been raised very prominently most recently in work in the social media. These are the kind of things that do indeed take time and I think it's important then that we, in turn, take time here in this House to grapple with these serious issues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Well the sands are indeed shifting and in the time that we have moved nowhere on this issue on Prince Edward Island, two other provinces: British Columbia and New Brunswick have changed their legislation to bring it up to what is considered to be a reasonable standard these days. The Premier spoke this week about how his government still has work to do before the next election is called.

Will the Premier commit to getting the work done on campaign finance and having new rules in place prior to the next election?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker – and I said in response to questions in this House yesterday, that it is our commitment. We have a plan. We have brought forward many measures that fulfill and implement that plan. One of them, most prominently, is a series of four great budgets for the people of this province – most recently introduced last Friday – and we have that on the floor right now and, indeed, that is on the order paper

and we look forward to following through on that.

We have a number of other bills that are on the Order Paper and that is exactly how we are going about our work and we look forward to doing that in a way that meets our commitments and that works together with all members of this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

There is nothing more sacred to our democracy than the integrity of its electoral system. After the 2016 plebiscite on democratic renewal, the Chief Electoral Officer arranged for an independent audit to be conducted to ensure the integrity of our voting process. In their report, the auditors noted that Elections PEI is understaffed and stated, I quote, "...PEI legislators should be aware that a spectacular electoral failure will inevitably occur in their province if this situation is not properly addressed."

### **Staffing at Elections PEI**

A question to the Premier: What have you done to address this dire situation?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, we – and, of course, this is ultimately the responsibility of legislative management to work with Elections PEI and to address questions of leadership and resources there. We have confidence in the team at Elections PEI and the Chief Electoral Officer, who is in place. I believe that's exactly what the role of the Premier should be, is to be responsive to that responsibility, I might say, of Elections PEI and legislative management to ensure that we do have confidence in our electoral system.

I think one element of that is to measure our language. I don't know for my own part if I think it was constructive to use such strong language in that report.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Perhaps I should be clear when I say 'quote'; I am quoting the words of someone else's report. That is the purpose of a quote and an end-quote statement. So, I'd like to be really clear on that for the record.

I also have great confidence in the work of the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections PEI. They are a phenomenal organization and they have made some very clear recommendations to improve elections on PEI, in particular in the report on the general election of 2015. There were 44 recommendations made.

### **Implemented recommendations from Elections PEI report**

Could the Premier perhaps clarify how many recommendations from that report have been implemented?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, we work – and I expect that that's the case that all members of this House work with Elections PEI and have confidence in Elections PEI and do our best to ensure that the people of Prince Edward Island have confidence in our electoral system.

That's something that's very dear to us. Democracy is a fragile plant, and I think it's very important that we continue to always do our best in this area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

This government has now ignored repeated requests to update the legislation and properly resource the administrative needs of Elections PEI based on independent auditor recommendations.

### Addressing administrative resource needs of Elections PEI

Premier: Will you commit to ensuring that these issues are fully addressed before the next general election, or will we have to do government's job for you as we did with the conflict of interest?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, on the question of the conflict of interest, it's my clear sense that there were recommendations that came forward from the legislative management committee of which all parties in this House are represented, which made a report, which is now on the table in the form of legislation. I think it's regrettable that the third party believes that it's its role to do its job or do legislative management's job for the committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

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

I think my question is for the Minister of Finance and I think we all remember the story of The Humble Barber where you had given him permission to apply for a liquor license through the PEI Liquor Control Commission, where now he can sell alcohol in his shops similar, to what they do in the salons.

### Liquor license in barber shops

My question to the minister is: Has this spurred on big business there? Have there been many others apply for a license in their shop similar to The Humble Barber?

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, a number of liquor license holders, industry associations and citizens across the province have voiced concerns with the PEILCC act and regulations and we're making changes as we move forward. Yes,

there has been some interest in regards to the similar license of The Humble Barber

Just a further note, that I actually had the opportunity to sit with The Humble Barber at the Summerside Chamber of Commerce and he told me that his bottom line has increased and his business is growing because of the change that we made.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford, your first supplementary.

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

### Review of *Liquor Control Act*

It leads into my main question. In the last of the fall session, I believe there was talk of a full review of the *Liquor Control Act* and I'm just wondering what steps are being taken to review that and can you bring this information on that Mr. Minister?

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

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

As we all know, the act – it takes time to change an act through the Legislative Assembly and so on in the course of action that you have to take, but we can change the regulations. We're moving on the regulations now, as a former minister of economic development, and trying to create and grow small businesses, and also the minister of tourism, where it's very concerning for the tourism industry to ensure that we provide the services that the tourists want.

We're moving through the act as we speak, and we hope to have something back to the House by the fall that would justify and satisfy many citizens and businesses across PEI.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford, your second supplementary.

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

This is, again, information I was looking for.

I know a lot of people are quite involved in how we handle liquor on Prince Edward Island. I'm just wondering what groups you may be meeting with to deal with that in reforming the act, bringing it up to date, and whether you'll bring back information with regards to that, as to who you met, and what time we actually will have this change completed.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Most appropriately, we've been meeting with all restaurants and bar owners; we've had all kinds of consultations with individual citizens that have experienced issues with the PEI act. The PEI act has not been revisited since the '70s. I think it was 1974 was the last time that it was looked at, for anything rewritten in regards to the act, so most definitely. We're meeting with as many people as possible and taking consultations. I even had the opportunity to meet with the Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale as most recent as a few weeks ago in regards to this.

So, we're opening the door. We're taking all the information possible that we can and just trying to justify it for the act and regulations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Yesterday, the minister of education stated that he wanted more departmental questions, but there's an old axiom: You should be careful what you wish for.

My question is to the minister of transportation. *The Guardian* reported on April the 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018, that the PEI government spends \$4.5 million in unbudgeted money on bridge repairs, land purchases and road work. During the paving season in 2017, I received a call from chief of staff Robert Vessey asking if I needed extra recap pavement for my district. He stated that they had an extra \$2 million for

paving, but to keep it quiet because it was targeted for Liberal-held districts only.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh!

**Chief of staff offering extra recap paving to Liberal districts**

**Mr. Dumville:** Question to the minister of transportation: why was this politically-motivated out of the chief of staff's office and not your department?

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

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

I think it was explained in the paper as to why we had a special warrant in regard to extra work on bridges and unexpected expenditures around that. But, our – my department, I will say, and our government has made investments since 2015 –

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

**Ms. Biggar:** – into provincial and federal investments in highways, public transit, water and wastewater, which came to \$218 million. We put \$14 million into municipalities through gas tax, and we put money into that member's district, and that member's district and all members' districts and we will continue to work right across –

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

**Ms. Biggar:** – the province with the districts to invest in infrastructure.

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

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

My district is mostly urban, so you didn't put an awful lot of recap into my district and I'm just talking about fairness here.

**Extra recap paving for opposition districts**

So, minister: Will you provide extra recap paving to residents in opposition districts that did not get the extra paving?

**Mr. Fox:** Yes.

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

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

Members will see in this upcoming Budget that we are investing more in recap. That's under capital –

**Mr. MacKay:** In all districts?

**Ms. Biggar:** – but we will be doing – but I will tell the member what we did do in District 25 West Royalty-Springvale. We put in over 11 kilometres of pavement in there. We did a bridge replacement out on Route 248 in Milton. We did the Miltonvale water field –

**Mr. LaVie:** You tried to fire him.

**Ms. Biggar:** – we did work on the Upton Road. We did work on Route 7, Milton Station. We laid asphalt. We will continue – I've been in touch, recently, with the Warren Grove residents. I'll continue to work with members right across the Island.

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

**Mr. Dumville:** That's just great, minister. You did so much in my district. I'm surprised there's anything left over for the other districts.

There's a pattern of troubling behaviour emanating out of Vessey's office.

Minister: Who's in charge of the department of transportation, you or Mr. Vessey?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, when I get a call from a community, I can tell you they don't call Rob Vessey's office; they call my office –

**Mr. Myers:** You don't know that (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** – I reply back to members –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) first call.

**Ms. Biggar:** – and I reply back to residents that have concerns. But we are going to be –

**An Hon. Member:** No, you don't.

**Ms. Biggar:** – investing, continue to invest in infrastructure right across Prince Edward Island. If that member doesn't want it in his district, great, but we will continue to work with the members and residents in his district. I will continue as Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and Status of Women to represent my department right across Prince Edward Island.

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

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

That's quite a revelation.

#### **Department money buying votes**

Question to the Premier: Do you allow your departments to use their department money to buy votes?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, if you go across our departments and I hope that the hon. members opposite recognize and appreciate this. For example, we're coming up to season now when we're dealing with, for example, summer jobs. I believe all hon. members on all sides of this House work actively with departments to achieve that.

Our objective, as a government, and through our departments is to serve the needs of Prince Edward Islanders. I'm proud to say that we're doing a great job of it.

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

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

You're doing a terrible job. There are roads in my district you can hardly walk on let alone drive your car on. So, you're doing an absolute –

**Mr. LaVie:** No, that's true.

**Mr. Myers:** – go to the Brothers Road –

**Mr. LaVie:** It's true.

**Mr. Myers:** Go drive the Brothers Road. You've got Amish carts that can't even drive their horse and cart down. They have to go on the shoulder. That is not a word of lie.

**Mr. LaVie:** True.

### **Recap split fairly across districts**

**Mr. Myers:** Question to the Premier: Why are you splitting up recap based on the geography of this province instead of who is Liberal and who is Conservative like it's 1950?

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

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

When we look across different districts, we look at where the biggest break up is; where the most traffic is. We do traffic counts. We put together a plan in consultation with the district supervisors that are out there on the roads every day. We certainly have –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) traffic (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** – consulted with the hon. members opposite on that side. They know very well that we have had consultation with them. I have had consultation with hon. members on what the needs in their districts are.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** But when we put together a plan –

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** – we have to take into consideration the traffic, the amount of break up on roads and go from there.

Thank you.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

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

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

When this Premier came to this Legislature he told Islanders he was going to be different. He was going to do away with all that stuff that had happened in the past. He was going to – anybody who was involved with that stuff was being done away with.

Now, we find today that, money, not just money, highway's money for repaving roads is being sent to targeted Liberal districts instead of being spread right across Prince Edward Island.

I don't think the people of Georgetown-St. Peters are less important than Liberal districts. I don't think that the members from Morell-Mermaid's district are less important than Liberal districts. I don't believe that any member has a district that's any more important than anyone else's district here on Prince Edward Island.

### **Department money buying votes (further)**

Question to the Premier: Why are you acting like it's 1950 and trying to buy votes?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

The one thing I will say our government has been able to do is negotiate a new road deal with the federal government where any road that has more than 1,000 cars on it is eligible for 50/50 funding.

But, I will tell the member over there from Georgetown-St. Peters just a little reminder, there has been 17.1 kilometres of recap put in his district.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** We did a bridge on Hazelgrove –

**Mr. Myers:** You put it right in front of Liberal –

**Ms. Biggar:** – the Hazelgreen Road bridge –

**Mr. Myers:** – houses. I can show  
(Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** – the Lorne Valley bridge –

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

**Ms. Biggar:** – the wood (Indistinct) bridge.  
The Baldwin Road, Dingwells Mills,  
Cardigan, Primrose –

**Mr. Myers:** Take it outside –

**Ms. Biggar:** – Georgetown Royalty –

**Mr. Myers:** Say it outside –

**Ms. Biggar:** – Baldwin Road roundabout –

**Mr. Myers:** – I had nothing to do with it –

**Ms. Biggar:** – Primrose and Farmington –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** – we are working with all –

**Mr. Myers:** That's the first time I've –

**Ms. Biggar:** – districts across –

**Mr. Myers:** – heard (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** – Prince Edward Island.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Get out more! Get out more  
and see what we do.

**Mr. Myers:** I'll have to call your boss and  
ask him to go recap, I guess.

**Mr. LaVie:** You should be ashamed.

**Mr. Myers:** Clearly, you have no decision-  
making power.

**Ms. Compton:** What a great minister.

**Mr. Myers:** Deputy minister –

**Leader of the Opposition:** How many  
times (Indistinct) call (Indistinct) time.

**Speaker:** Everybody okay now? We all  
settled –

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

**Speaker:** – down?

**Mr. LaVie:** No. Shut her down.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) three, four  
(Indistinct)

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

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) schools.

[End of Question Period]