



Session:	3/65
Date:	13 April 2018
No:	27

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

FRIDAY, 13 APRIL 2018

Questions by Members

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, during the debate on our bill to amend the *Municipal Government Act*, the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment said the following: I live in the city, and you talk to the people in those apartments, and a lot are from rural PEI. And when you ask them why they moved to town, they say it's because there are no services in rural PEI.

Services in rural PEI

Question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Do you understand how insulting that is to many people in rural PEI?

Mr. Myers: Oh, good question.

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

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

It was a great debate yesterday in the House. I'm just relaying what some people are telling me.

People want rural PEI to be successful. I want rural PEI to be successful. What makes Prince Edward Island the great place it is for people to raise families and live here, is because of rural PEI. And the city is great because of rural PEI. That's what I want to do is make rural PEI great.

Mr. Myers: We don't need your help.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: We're doing fine on our own. We don't need your help.

Speaker: The hon. Member –

Mr. Myers: Stay in Charlottetown.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I looked at that as a ringing endorsement of how this government has hollowed services in rural PEI and it was basically supported by the minister.

Rural PEI has seen this government decreasing our services while forcing tax hike after tax hike on us.

Question to the minister: Why do you think amalgamation and higher taxes will do more for growing communities than ending the cuts and restoring services to rural PEI?

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

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

This government is totally committed to rural PEI. The Premier has created a department of rural development because he recognizes the importance of it. I wish the members across –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) Robert Ghiz.

Mr. R. Brown: – would recognize the importance of rural PEI –

Mr. Myers: Robert Ghiz did that.

Mr. R. Brown: – too. Because without rural PEI, without the vibrant communities in rural PEI, we would not have a great PEI –

Mr. Myers: Robert Ghiz (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: – as we have today, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) 90 million (Indistinct)

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Erosion of government services in PEI

Let's ask the Minister of Rural and Regional Development: Do you support the erosion of government services and forced amalgamation in this province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; pleasure to get up and answer some questions.

Of course, I support the development of rural Prince Edward Island. That's in my mandate and my mandate letter. I'll do everything I can to bring economic development to rural Prince Edward Island. That's why our government recently announced rural growth initiative –

Some Hon. Members: How much is that?

Mr. Murphy: – with \$2.6 million –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Murphy: – to help advance rural Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: Not the rural development fund.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) laughing over there.

Mr. LaVie: \$5 million (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Rural Prince Edward Island back (Indistinct)

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Communities, Land and Environment blames his forced amalgamation on rural PEI because there are no government services.

We have seen this government come for our schools twice –

Mr. Myers: Shame.

Ms. Compton: – this government has come for our emergency rooms and our health services –

Mr. Myers: Shame.

Ms. Compton: Islanders all across Prince Edward Island are concerned.

Restoring services and growing community

Does the Minister of Rural and Regional Development agree that restoring opportunities and services and growing our communities is a better solution than forced amalgamation?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I support the growth and development of rural Prince Edward Island and I support the communities being the makers of their own destiny. The Three Rivers project came – it was community-based. That was driven by the community. And all along our government has been saying it: we're not going to force amalgamation on anybody that doesn't want it.

I don't know where this line of question is coming from.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We did a little research here from the Legislative Services and found out that only 11% of positions in the provincial government are located in Kings County –

Mr. Myers: What?

Ms. Compton: – and only 8% in West Prince.

Mr. Myers: No.

Provincial government jobs in rural PEI

Ms. Compton: To help rural communities create their own destiny wouldn't it be a great idea if we took some of those over 10,000 positions in the provincial government, including the civil service, health, education, only 11% in Kings County and only 8% in West Prince, wouldn't it be a great idea to move some of those jobs into rural PEI –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: There it is.

Mr. Trivers: There's a solution for you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The previous Liberal administration did move the department of fisheries and rural development to Montague. The department of education to Summerside. We built a new Holland College facility in Alberton –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: What's that got to do with government jobs?

Mr. R. Brown: They're government jobs.

Mr. Murphy: These are government jobs and I think we'll continue to look –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) Holland College.

Mr. Murphy: – for opportunities to support rural Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

11% in Kings County; 8% in West Prince.

Mr. Myers: Shame.

Ms. Compton: We're talking about growing our rural communities and growing the economy. We're talking about ensuring people want to stay in their communities –

Mr. LaVie: Wouldn't mind having a doctor.

Ms. Compton: – the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment spoke yesterday about the fact that they don't want to because the services aren't there. While,

if there were jobs, people would live there. They would stay in rural communities.

Cuts to schools, health care and an unequal distribution of provincial jobs.

Question to the minister: Why are you allowing the minister of communities, from downtown Charlottetown, to run down rural PEI and why is this government not distributing more government jobs, more fairly in rural areas?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

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

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

That was one of the reasons why people switched governments in 2007, because the former Tory government wanted to divide Prince Edward Island: urban and rural; wanted us to fight with each other all the time. That was their –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: – mantra: get them fighting with each other. The Liberal government of the day said: no, we're one Island community. When we came to power, we wanted things right –

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: – across Prince Edward Island –

Mr. Myers: It's called Charlottetown –

Mr. R. Brown: – you know what –

Mr. Myers: – (Indistinct) that one Island community (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: – I am extremely proud to be an MLA from Charlottetown, but what makes me more proud is, I want rural PEI to grow. I want people to move to rural PEI because if it's good for rural PEI it's good for the City of Charlottetown –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) Charlottetown (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: – and it's good for people of Prince Edward Island.

I want to unite this province, not divide it, because that's (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: – because that's what we should be doing.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Parents of young children are already struggling to make ends meet. That shouldn't be news to this government. After you pay for housing, food, transportation, many households don't have much left in their bank accounts.

Impact of discretionary spending of young Islanders

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Does your department worry about the impact that discretionary spending is having on the overall health and wellness of our young Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the member for the question. A few weeks ago, we released our child report on Prince Edward Island that showed just where we are at this point in time. Certainly there are areas of concern in that report, where children are experiencing difficulties and families are experiencing difficulties when it comes to best food health, in areas of development, in recreation. So, there's work to be done there, and we'll continue to work with families all across PEI to aid those situations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister should know that social determinants for health are complex. They include social services, personal health practices, culture, support networks, education and so on. At the end of the day, the overall health and wellness of our children has many moving parts, but it rests on his department's shoulders.

Social determinants of health

Question to the minister of health: Does your department work with other departments to ensure that social determinants of health are being satisfied for our children and our youth?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Some Hon. Members: Oh (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is a great opportunity for the Minister of Finance, who just presented, likely, the best budget in 40 years in the province of PEI. You want to talk about what we're doing for vulnerable Islanders, let's go back two years ago where we talked about the Generic Drug Program.

We just increased child subsidies of 400 spaces right across the Island. We've taken students from the cradle to a career; over 1,000 students with – likely coming from low income families – over 1,000 students with free tuition. We've increased the shelter rates; we've increased the food rates. We're looking after mental illness, which can be attributed sometimes to low income subsidies. We've decreased the rate of electricity.

We are looking after vulnerable Islanders and it's sometimes frustrating to hear the opposition continuously trying to paint a picture of desperation when the government of the day is looking after Islanders in many ways.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Research has shown that our children and our youth are not getting enough physical activity. One of the biggest barriers is the rising cost of living and the increased cost to participate in sport and recreational activities.

In 2016, the Liberal Party of Canada announced they were discontinuing the children's fitness tax credit that helped countless families ensure their children participate in sport and recreational activities. We're now starting to see the effects of losing this tax credit.

Tax credits cut for kids' sports

Question to the Minister of Finance: Why is it that your Budget failed to provide assistance to families so their children could participate in programming that provides physical, social, and emotional benefits that can impact the rest of the children's lives.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, over the past year, we've been really trying to promote Be Aware & Get Your Share; \$25 million extra coming to the Province of Prince Edward Island –\$100 million over four years.

There are all kinds of initiatives out there that we're acting on as a government to ensure that we do look after our most vulnerable and the children of PEI. I've had many people come up to me since this budget has rolled out saying: Thank you, you're making life much easier. Not to mention the personal income tax exemption. Not to mention that we've got near 30,000 people and they're not paying any tax on Prince Edward Island anymore.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Aside from the lack of affordability, the next barrier that parents are identifying is the lack of time to allow their children to participate in these programs. More often we are seeing parents working multiple jobs in order to make ends meet, which means they have

less time to provide elective opportunities like sports to their children.

Ensuring of physical activity for children

Question to the minister of education: What is the department of education doing to ensure that children are receiving 60 minutes of moderate physical activity each and every day?

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

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

I'm happy to get this question because it lets me talk about the new health curriculum that we're developing and the fact that that's going to be rolled out this upcoming fall. But I also want to go back to the preamble to this question where the hon. member was talking about parents that were working.

As we noted here, we have had tremendous investment in our early childhood sector. That's allowing parents to get back to work; 700,000 is going into child care subsidies that's enabling that. We've set up programming to allow parents that work irregular shifts to be able to go to it. We've added spaces to the programming and overall, it's enabling children to have a better life that they had before.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is that research shows that physical activity can be directly tied to academic performance. Teachers in this province agree that children need physical activity for proper development of their physical, social, and emotional wellbeing. The most recent physical education curriculum posted on the government's website shows that the minimum requirement is not in line with research that says children should be getting 60 minutes of physical activity each day. The curriculum only requires students in kindergarten to grade six to get 75 minutes of physical activity per week.

Allotted time for physical activity in schools

Question to the minister of education: Do you stand by these standards, or do you believe that it's time the department of education take a serious look at the allotted time for physical activity at our Island schools?

Mr. Trivers: Easy solution (Indistinct)

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

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

This is something that the curriculum folks in our department do look at on a regular basis. I'm not going to profess to be a curriculum expert here today, but I will say this; from the last that I had heard, the curriculum experts were looking at new benchmarks in that area where we're looking at the time – kind of the intents of time to have that period of exercise on each day, or in given intervals, over the course of the week, rather than one prolonged period necessarily. We've seen a lot of different things in our schools including stationary bikes, including balls, including little stools the kids sit on in classrooms.

There's a lot of yoga and mindfulness being practiced now at schools that wasn't a couple of years ago. So, we're looking at this, but that's to say we always have room to improve and we're looking at doing that too.

An Hon. Member: Right on.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The teachers in this province obviously believe that physical activity plays a key role in the healthy development of our children. That's why you see them volunteering countless hours that they aren't paid for, coaching and providing extracurricular activities.

Health and wellness of children in province

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: You obviously haven't talked to the Minister of Finance and you obviously haven't talked to the minister of education about the importance of physical education on the overall health of young Islanders.

Will you commit today to working collaboratively with other departments to lay a better foundation for the health and wellness for the children in this province?

Mr. Trivers: Illness prevention.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

We, as a government, we understand how important physical activity is for our young Islanders all across our wonderful Island here. It provides – two-fold, actually hon. member – it develops their physical literacy skill, but it also develops confidence in our young people on Prince Edward Island.

That's why we recently signed our recent sport bilateral agreement with the federal government that helps us with funding so we can put dollars out into community organizations that are running organizations in communities all across Prince Edward Island – as well as Sport PEI, sport councils all across Prince Edward Island. So, we're making significant investments –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: – because we know the full value of having our youth involved in sport and it's a multipurpose function for these youth to develop confidence, to develop academic skills, and develop athletic skills.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Two weeks ago a large sinkhole was found by highway staff on the Irishtown Road, forcing the road to be closed after the culvert failed. Thankfully, there were no safety

issues and staff from highways quickly responded to the situation.

Failed culvert on Irishtown Road

Question to the transport minister: I understand that the old, failed culvert will be replaced with a new, larger culvert structure. How long will these repairs take?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The member's correct. It was, not really what we call a sinkhole, it was a failure of the culvert that was under the road, which caused that washout of that culvert. We did immediately call in a contractor to start that work. They were onsite immediately that day that it was found. We are increasing the size of that structure, actually. Work is ongoing and I can bring back an estimated completion time, but we will be working within the next couple of weeks and that should be wrapped up.

We are aware that there is a detour there, and we'll be very cognizant to have that completed as soon as we can.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The new larger culvert structure will be more durable and should last longer.

Cost of new culverts

Question to the minister: How much will these costs – do these repairs take?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As it was an unbudgeted expenditure, obviously, I'll have to go back, hon. member, and determine what it is expected that that cost will be.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Tenders for culvert work

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the transport minister: Was this work tendered?

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, due to the emergency that occurred because of that washout, we had to go out to the type of construction company that would be able to do that work onsite immediately. It was not a tendered process, no, because of the urgency that needed to have somebody onsite right away.

A tender process takes about a month, so we couldn't wait a month to put things out to tender because, as you say, you want to know when the work is going to be done and by the time a tender was done, we could have had the work done.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the minister just stated that we didn't go out to tender on this process and we went to a company that does that work.

Contractor from minister's district

Question to the transport minister: Why was this contract issued to a company directly from your district when there were other companies closer that do the exact same work?

Mr. Trivers: Oh, great question. Rob Vessey must have (Indistinct)

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

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: Actually, Mr. Speaker, the company who got the contract to do this work is Noye & Noye Construction. They're not from my district.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, maybe the Member from West Royalty-Springvale was onto something yesterday with his questions. Common sense would say to me and Islanders, that if you needed to make quick road repairs that you would use a contractor closer to the job site than your house.

Question to the minister: Is this a one-off case or is this political patronage?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, we have to employ companies that have expertise in doing that particular kind of work. Again, to reiterate, the company that is doing that –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – work is not from my district and I have no affiliation with them other than their families in the –

Mr. LaVie: They cut your grass.

Ms. Biggar: – area. They employ all kinds of different –

Mr. LaVie: They cut your grass.

Ms. Biggar: – political stripes as part of their workers.

Mr. R. Brown: Vessey must have picked (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, our main concern was to get on the job, get the work started, make sure the road is safe and get the work complete.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) all it says.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Yesterday afternoon the third party introduced a motion calling on this Assembly to urge government to amend the *Elections Expenses Act* to ban corporate and union donations and also to set a cap on individual donations to political parties.

In response, the Premier spoke quite passionately about our electoral traditions, but perhaps the most single impressive aspect of the Premier's remarks was that he managed to talk for 17 minutes –

Mr. Roach: Question.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – minutes on this topic without once using the words 'union', 'corporate', or 'corporation'.

Banning of union and corporate donations

A question to the Premier: Could you please state once and for all what your position is on banning union and corporate donations?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to hear that the Leader of the Third Party is keeping track of the time that was spent speaking to that motion because the mover and the seconder spoke for a total of four minutes and 30 seconds, which doesn't indicate that they've got too much interest in the subject.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Clearly the fragile plant of democracy requires both water and fertilizer in order for it to thrive.

Yesterday the Premier also spoke about Islanders and supporters who contribute to our political wellbeing, and how we really need more of that type of engagement.

Again to the Premier: When you referenced these Islanders, were you thinking about the banks and the investment firms that donated \$25,000 to your last election campaign, or

the over \$60,000 that your party received from construction companies?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'd recommend to the Leader of the Third Party that he go back and replay my remarks from yesterday. He must have; he got it to 17 minutes. I thought I spoke longer than that.

But in any event, as I recall, I spoke about supporters. I spoke about activists. I spoke about people who encourage people to nominate, that people who would engage on political issues. I was very clear that we're talking about the full span of Islanders who will engage in our democratic process and be encouraged and honoured and respected for what they do to take part in our political life, and I stick to that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

It would seem that the Premier cannot distinguish between corporations and actual people.

A question to the Premier: Why do you think it is acceptable for you and your party to take money from corporations and unions, when seven provinces and the federal government have already banned this practice?

Mr. Trivers: Apparently money buys respect (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we have been talking about this going back to 2015 and I believe people in this Assembly have spoken about this for generations before that; to perfect, to build; to continuously improve our political process.

I don't think it's very healthy to approach that as if everyone, except apparently the Leader of the Third Party, is somehow up to no good, or to be dishonourable, or to be not contributing properly and democratically to what we're achieving around here. Some

days, I wonder if the third party's program is that no one around here was either smarter or honest until they showed up.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is for the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Prince Edward Island is heavily dependent on our road network, providing safe transportation to Islanders and to get our goods to market.

Recap pavement completed last year

Can the minister please inform the House how much recap was done last year?

Mr. LaVie: And where and when?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Actually, Prince Edward Island has the most roads per capita in Canada –

Mr. Myers: Good MLAs get pavement. How come you don't?

Ms. Biggar: – with 5,375 kilometres. Just to recap, the amount that has been paved – in 2015 it was 66 kilometres; 2016, 77; 2017, there was 100 kilometres.

This year we expect to do in that range, and over that period of time there was also 120 kilometres of capital paving, for a total of 361 kilometres since 2015. That actually brings us up to about 10% of those roads being paved across PEI.

Mr. LaVie: 10% (Indistinct)

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

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the same minister. Yesterday, there were comments made about

politics playing a part. I know how much my district received last year. Then I heard the long list of investments made in the District of Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Good MLA.

Department decision for recap of roads

Mr. Roach: Can the minister inform the House how the department decides which roads to invest in?

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

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) I'll put it on Facebook (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are many factors that go into how many kilometers of roads we're able to do on annual basis; one of that is asphalt prices. The other thing that comes into account is the traffic on those roads.

What this government did when Justin Trudeau's government came into power with us working as a partner, prior to that it had to have 10,000 cars on a road before you qualified for any kind of federal. Now, it's down to 1,000.

We concentrate on our economic connectors, as well; our farming areas, our fishing areas. That all comes into account –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters seemed to be –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – surprised how much he had. He might want to get out and have a drive around and see what I did do.

Mr. Myers: You know when I'm the focus of your questions things are going wrong over there.

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

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Fair decision on investment of roads

My question is to the same minister: Can the minister inform the House whether investments in roads and recap have been made in a fair manner across this province?

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

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) Budget estimates.

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, the members across know that I have communication with them. What are your priority roads? If –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – you have a road –

Mr. Myers: You don't (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – that's bad, I get calls. I get calls from the municipalities in that area. Calls from people who live on certain roads and I work with them.

There were some petty accusations –

Mr. Myers: You blocked me on Twitter.

Ms. Biggar: – made in this House yesterday –

Mr. Myers: You blocked me on Twitter.

Ms. Biggar: – from the Member from West Royalty-Springvale. If he would like to talk about conversations, he might want to talk about his conversation wanting to be Lieutenant Governor and a senator.

Speaker: The hon. –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) yourself up.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today may have a different theme than the Leader of the Third Party's but it probably has the same content.

I've been approached by several young families in my district and their concerns is that all public places have proper baby

changing stations so that mothers and fathers can change their baby's diaper without having to worry about it.

So many of these places are – restaurants and that, that are accessible it allows mothers and fathers the comfort and the privacy to spend their money at these places, and go to those places more often.

Regulations for baby changing stations

Minister of Health and Wellness: Are there any regulations in place for seeing establishments to have baby changing stations on their premises?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Perry: Sorry, Peter.

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

Certainly, the health and safety of our youngest Islanders are top priority for the Department of Health and Wellness on Prince Edward Island.

Currently, the public health nurses have several programs for our Island infants; the immunization program, the baby reading program. We also have prenatal education and as well, as the breastfeeding supports program, and many, many others.

We do not have a policy on change tables. However, our inspections department do inspect that the sanitary needs are met for those baby changing stations. But, we do not have any regulations in place, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, this is your first supplementary question.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can certainly relate to these young families. I know back when my boys were younger they always chose the most inappropriate time to change the aroma in their surroundings.

Mothers and fathers should feel comfortable while they're out in public; if so, if the child

needs to be changed that they should have a proper place to do this.

Minister: Will your department act upon this and put proper regulations in place?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, as mentioned, young families of new babies, certainly face a lot of challenges; sleepless night, for one, car – or getting their car seats ready for their vehicles, baby-proofing their house. They have a lot of things that they have to work with.

What we did initiate recently is the baby friendly initiative breastfeeding program. We work with facilities all across the Island; rinks, sports facilities, and commercial business, to establish areas where young mothers can breastfeed their babies in a very private, yet open way. We're continuing to work on programs such as those.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Young families are quite a bit different than our generation. They're on the move more. They're out spending money.

Would you consider putting incentives in place for restaurants and other establishments to install or to implement baby changing stations?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, I am sure, as others on the floor of the Legislature are aware of, I'll say, commercial businesses that already have installed baby stations. We know when we are visiting those areas of business we see these facilities.

The university has one. Some rink facilities have them, as well. They do provide that service for those young families.

I think, you know, as far as regulation of installation that would probably fall under some kind of a building code method. As far as incentives or anything of that nature, I think that would probably be something that we could look at through, perhaps, the family – with family and human services. Or, if it's a commercial area, perhaps we can develop a program, as well through workforce or something of that nature. We'll continue to look at options, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Mr. LaVie: Let's get some truth.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: Some truth.

Mr. Myers: So after seven years, I've finally become the subject of a Question Period, which was actually pretty fun. A couple of clarifications that the minister needs to hear is that she didn't do anything, and neither did Justin Trudeau to change that collector roads thing. It was Rob Vessey and Denis Lebel who brought it in. He did all the work. You can't take the credit for him running your department.

As far as the open communication she has, everybody who is blocked on Twitter by her, which is the majority of Islanders, would know how open the communication is with her.

Taxpayers' dollars used for protection of Liberal party

Question to the Premier: Premier, will you finally tell Islanders why you believe it's acceptable that you're using millions of dollars in taxpayers' money to further and protect the interests of your party?

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) what that is.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we have a budget of between 1.7 and \$1.8 billion. That was, indeed, further and advance the interests of all Prince Edward Islanders, whether that's in electricity rates,

or child care spaces or health care or education or assistance for people who are vulnerable Islanders.

We're proud of that. I expect that's one of the reasons that we're in government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On April 3rd, Cabinet approved \$2 million to a numbered company owned by Austin and Ramona Roberts. Ramona was one of the Premier's handpicked candidates, as you recall, in the last election; the one that actually lost to the Member from Borden-Kinkora. Talk is, the Premier is trying to line her up to run again.

Question to the Premier: Why is it your loan practice to use millions of dollars of taxpayers' money to secure yourself a Liberal candidate?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the hon. member in his long question used the word 'loan' that was probably the closest to an accurate representation of what this is that he came.

Austin and Ramona Roberts are great leaders in their community. They're great business people. They've got – I was out there to visit that place. I wasn't there for political reasons; I get around the community. They've got well upwards of 200 employees in their various businesses. They're redeveloping that site at DeSable, which was defunct for 12 years or more.

This pattern of running down and defaming and denigrating good Island businesses is something that we've seen regularly from the minister from Morell-St. Peters –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – from St. Peters-Georgetown –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – and we've seen it from others across there. It's time we started recognizing what our Island businesses have done to advance and continue to do to advance our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have a picture here. I'm going to talk about the picture later.

\$2 million, now \$2 million you gave to a vacant property in DeSable to a veiled Liberal candidate, who you're trying to get to run again. The same day, the same Cabinet meeting, a second loan of \$5.25 million was given to another business owned by Ramona Roberts and her husband.

Dollars to secure Liberal candidate

Premier: Why are you using taxpayers' money to the tune of \$7.25 million to secure a Liberal candidate?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I recognize that the word 'loan' had been deployed in the previous question, but you don't give a loan. This is done through a rigorous process through our investment agencies and those come forward through Treasury Board and Cabinet. They are done where there's a business case for it, where there's a proven track record, where the money is being repaid –

Mr. Trivers: If only the information was public (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – where the money is being repaid, and there is no consideration whatsoever of whatever political affiliations people may have.

I can assure this House – I can assure this House that there is no link at all between the business relations – and it's a business relationship that the province has with the Roberts and whatever their politics might be.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I have a picture here that has Ramona Roberts' close – the Liberal Cabinet in her restaurant. So I have this here and I'll table it later.

Timing of loans approved

Question to the Premier: did you approve Ramona Roberts' loans, both of them, at this meeting before this picture or after this picture?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the facility where we met in Kensington that day, and I hope the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque was pleased to know that we were out there spending some money, was we were there for a meeting. We were there for the first time, in fact, to use that meeting room and we paid our bill and it was a perfect room for it.

As we arrived at the meeting, I said we should call Ramona to see if she'd come and see us because we're here in her place, being the first ones to use that facility and she came in her farm clothes because she was at the wash plant working. That was the extent. We were in her community and in her facility, and we invited her to come and see us, as we did the Mayor of Kensington, Rowan Caseley, who came and joined us as well.

This is all about being out with our community and being associated with successes, whoever they're associated with, and we're proud of that. I'm proud of what we can see throughout the area of Kensington-Malpeque.

I want to say one more thing because they keep saying and saying about rural PEI, rural PEI – when we did the last electoral boundaries, we had three districts in this order that had grown relative to three elections ago.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: The first was Stratford.

Mr. Fox: Bingo.

Premier MacLauchlan: The second was my district, York-Oyster Bed and the third was Kensington-Malpeque.

So, let's stop all of this rural-urban fighting that they're encouraging from the other side. Rural PEI is doing well and is doing well because of –

Mr. LaVie: Is this a statement?

Premier MacLauchlan: – the work of people like Rowan Caseley and Ramona Roberts who joined us for that lunch.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, that's an awful long ramble to defend how dirty Liberals have become here in Prince Edward Island. Dirty Liberals doing dirty Liberal work. Islanders aren't surprised with that.

I was down at the garage in Cardigan the other morning and I had a fellow told me he hurt his back and he had to go to the hospital and he was in Halifax for four months, and he had a personal loan for his business because he couldn't get money from the government and he had to figure out a way to pay back every cent of those payments back, four of them, while he laid in a hospital bed with no help and no way of operating his business at all.

Loans to businesses

Question to the Premier: Are you having so much trouble convincing candidates to run for you that you have to buy their way in?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, people in this House may recall that there was a lot of election talk here last Friday

coming from across the floor and we tried to quiet that down. Now, they're trying to start it up –

Mr. MacKay: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Now they're trying to start it up again. I'm happy to say that I spend a lot of time getting around in this province and we don't have any trouble getting people to associate with our party, to support our party and to be prepared to run for our party.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, we'll certainly see because I'm hearing some gems out there. You're going to have quite a bunch running –

Ms. Biggar: Buckle up.

Mr. Myers: – for you next time from what I hear.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: This is the government here –

Mr. LaVie: We see them.

Mr. Myers: – dirty Liberal government doing dirty Liberal tricks and using taxpayers' money to help their dirty Liberal friends. That's what this is all about. It's dirty, and Islanders are sick of you guys, how dirty you are. I'm sick of it.

Your taxes are through the roof. You're jacking taxes up on Islanders. A normal Islander can't get a business loan because they're not a dirty Liberal.

Even playing field for all Island businesses

Question to the Premier: When are you going to stop the political abuse of taxpayers' dollars and let everyone in at a fair and even playing field even if they're not a dirty Liberal?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, that may be clear on this point, that as the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism tells us on many occasions, our loan portfolio was throughout the province 60% in rural district; \$30 million, Member from Georgetown-St. Peters in the Georgetown-St. Peters district.

Good businesses; we believe in them. I hope you don't think and go back and tell them they're dirty. I guess that's what you think you said today. But, let's be clear, and this is what we talked about yesterday when no one from the official opposition was prepared to even get up and speak on the motion that the third party –

Mr. Myers: I was on the list and wasn't given a change (Indistinct). You filibustered it.

Premier MacLauchlan: – dealt with so briefly.

People who support political parties – and we still believe in political parties, by the way – people who support political parties in this province should be recognized and encouraged for their engagement in the political process and people who do well in business should be encouraged and supported and recognized for the success that they're producing and there's no connection between the two, but all of them should be respected because they're great Prince Edward Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

[End of Question Period]