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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

TUESDAY, 24 APRIL 2018



Questions by Members

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

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

Last week, the Charlottetown youth advisory board released a very eye-opening report on youth housing here in Charlottetown. The report states: that accessible, affordable housing is a crisis for young people in the greater Charlottetown area.

**Affordable housing crisis for Island youth**

Question to the Premier: What is your government doing to respond to the issues raised in this report about the affordable housing crisis for Island youth?

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

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

We believe that affordable, appropriate housing is one of the most important social infrastructures that we can have in our province.

Last year, we launched a poverty – or a housing strategy. We're doing that in collaboration with our community partners; with developers and with our co-ops. We are looking forward to the results of that action strategy coming out in June.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Charlottetown Youth Matters surveyed over 850 young Islanders between the ages of 16 to 35 years about the issues that they're facing to find and keep affordable housing options.

What they heard was that 56% of respondents were spending more than 30% of their pre-tax income on housing. That exceeds affordable housing standards set out

by the Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation.

**Government and affordability challenge**

Question to the Premier: How is your government dealing with the affordability challenge?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question.

We are well aware of the work of the group that was looking at the housing for youth; congratulate them on that work. In the course of their presentation and the presentation of their results they, actually, acknowledged the work that the province is doing in taking an initiative in creating a housing task force and putting in place a commitment over four years to have units of affordable housing; and, in working to create employment for young people in this area. I think that's really the number one point to take from this is: we have a lot of young people in our city and in our province who have new opportunities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Again, I'll go back to some of the statistics that came back from this report; 58% of the youth surveyed reported earning less than \$35,000, while, 40% of youth reported earning less than \$25,000.

Of course, low wages were identified as a huge barrier by this report.

Question again, to the Premier: How can we create an environment for our youth to thrive if they simply can't afford to live here?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, we are, indeed, working on the housing supply and we believe that's

really the number one front on which to address the housing issue. But, let me comment to the income issue. In our budget for those young people, who have student loans, each of them has the opportunity to have a \$3,500 debt reduction, tax-free –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – so we use the numbers – if we use the numbers that the Leader of the Opposition presented, we're looking at putting in the hands of those people immediately resources that are well in excess or on the order of 20% of their income. That's a big move, Mr. Speaker. We're proud of it.

Thank you.

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

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

I think the Premier has completely missed the mark on the question that I just asked. We're talking about 40% of youth reported earning less than \$25,000.

I'm not talking about student loans because, unfortunately, many of these youth probably didn't even have the opportunity to take post-secondary education so they may or may not even have student loans.

The report also noted that the rental market in the greater Charlottetown area is actually tighter than Vancouver's for available supply. Even if a young Islander can afford good housing, the available supply is simply not there, or is extremely limited.

**Affordable housing crisis for Island youth (further)**

Question to the Premier: Unless we find ways to address this affordable housing crisis, won't retaining and repatriating young Islanders become even more difficult?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** We believe in our young people, and we believe that they're here, in our province because there are

futures, because there are opportunities and because they are building lives here; which, really, was the point that comes out of the work of that group, and of that work that goes back to Fusion Charlottetown.

We have committed to 1,000 units of affordable housing in our province over four years. That's a big commitment. Further, we are working with the Housing Supply Task Force and they are starting with an inventory of work that is underway today and in this construction season. I believe we will be very impressed by the amount of work that is going on in the construction sector to meet that need.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

It would be very enlightening, perhaps, to learn what this Premier considers affordable housing.

Demographics, the growth of the sharing economy and immigration are just some of the key factors at play here. This problem simply isn't going away.

**Demands on rental market in PEI**

Question again to the Premier: What is your government doing to keep the rental market from overheating even further as we've seen in Vancouver and other cities across Canada?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, in a word, 'supply.' We are proud that there is demand for housing in our province and what that reflects, in term of what young people are experiencing in opportunities, in growth and in building community and culture.

We want them to be in our province. We recognize that and applaud it. Very precisely, it is on the supply side that we have committed and that we did commit in creating the Housing Supply Task Force, and what we know is taking place in the

construction sector, last year. We had a 66% increase over the previous year in terms of new housing. We know that it's expanding again at that rate this year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

After years of neglect, the issue of land ownership and speculation is finally beginning to see a hint of attention from this government.

Last fall, with opposition's urging, our Legislative standing committee began to look into this issue and hear from groups concerned about it. Our committee heard from groups like the Federation of Agriculture and the National Farmers Union, with several others on the witness list.

What we heard was that government was being negligent in addressing the issues of land ownership and speculation.

#### **Addressing issues on land ownership**

A question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Why has it taken government so long to wake up to this issue?

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

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

I have, in my hand here, Doug Boylan's report, 1990. Doug, at that time, outlined a number of issues, similar to what we're discussing today. One of the reasons I've been hearing what the opposition have been hearing – concerns about Island land and Island land ownership and the need to protect our farmland here on Prince Edward Island because I believe our farmland on Prince Edward Island is a natural resource like any other natural resource across this country. We must protect it at all times, Mr. Speaker.

That is why I've asked IRAC to do a report on non-resident land ownership as they done in 2005 and I want that report updated.

Thank you.

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

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

The minister should know this is not just about farmland. In the *Lands Protection Act, PEI* any non-resident or corporation that wants to own more than five acres or more than 165 ft. of waterfront needs to get approval by the Premier and Cabinet through an official Order-in-Council. In any given year, the vast majority of Orders-in-Council approved deal with land sale approvals.

#### **Volume of land approvals**

Question to the minister: What concerns did the volume of all these land approvals raise around the Cabinet table?

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, I'm bound by Cabinet confidentiality.

Thank you.

**Mr. Myers:** It's okay to say you're scared.

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

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

It's great to see the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment embrace openness and transparency.

As of last week, Cabinet has approved 222 Orders-in-Council so far in 2018. One hundred and thirty four of the 222 were land sale approvals.

#### **Two-thirds of Cabinet decisions re: land sale approvals**

A question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Are you surprised to know that almost two-thirds of all Cabinet decisions to date in 2018 are land sale approvals?

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, I've attended a number of meetings across Prince Edward Island and this issue has been coming up at meetings all across Prince Edward Island and I defer to BCs report that they've done a tremendous report out in BC in terms of land ownership. We are a beautiful province. People want to come to Prince Edward Island to live and enjoy Prince Edward Island. We look forward to some of these non-residents moving here permanently to make our Island an even better place to live.

Thank you.

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

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

At standing committee, we had ministers and former minister that are more than happy to speak openly about this like the Minister of Finance or the Member from Montague-Kilmuir. In fact, the executive director of the federation of agriculture got some pretty stiff pushback over their concerns.

The federation referenced on set of numbers from government on ownership levels, while the Member from Montague-Kilmuir quoted an entirely different set of numbers that he said came directly from government – I don't know how he got them. Government appears to be quoting one figure on land ownership levels to groups like the federation of agriculture and government is quoting another figure to government MLAs. The minister says he doesn't even know what the number really is.

Question to the minister: What are the real figures and why don't you know them?

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

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

As I said earlier, non-residents can buy property here on Prince Edward Island. Five acres, 168 shore footage. They can then move here and decide to stay here, which many of them do, Mr. Speaker. So there's a

transition period that – that's why I've asked IRAC to review the numbers, to get us the final set of numbers, and from the data that comes back from IRAC we'll be able to make decisions based on our land ownership and the requirements.

Thank you.

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

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

Finally, the minister is taking some action and, yes, going IRAC to find out how much land is owned by non-residents and corporations and if anyone is breaking the rules legislated in the *Lands Protection Act, PEI*; however the *Lands Protection Act, PEI* does not limit land ownership of parcels less than five acres.

### **Review of landownership by non-residents**

Question to the minister: Will this review include a breakdown of all the land owned by non-residents and corporations including those that own property less than five acres?

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

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

We are working with IRAC, but we're also working with the property tax assessment department.

As you know, any non-resident has to pay double taxation when they're a non-resident of Prince Edward Island and owning a cottage or owning a piece of property. So, we're working with the assessment department to determine those acreages that are under five acres.

We will get a comprehensive review through this report and then from the facts, we will then move forward on what we should be doing in terms of land ownership on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Over here, we want the facts. Islanders want the facts. It's refreshing to hear you phrased that as double tax. The former minister of finance said: No, no, people don't get double taxed – the non-resident – everybody else gets a 50% rebate, Mr. Speaker. So it's good to hear you being a little more transparent.

We have seen Canadian cities like Vancouver with skyrocketing real estate prices, mainly caused by non-resident property for speculative investment purposes – purchases of that. Here in PEI, we're seeing similar trends. Fortunately, with action, I believe we can still nip any potential problem in the bud, so let's learn from the experiences of others and act now.

**Review and evaluate *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.***

**Minister:** Will you commit to having your department review and evaluate the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.* with respect to the current pricing and land ownership trends on PEI to ensure that it is adequate?

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

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

That's the reason we are working with the property tax section – our department – and we've asked IRAC to review its datum in order to ensure that we have proper data in front of us when we go to make decisions and that we have the proper facts in front of us. I only hope, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition can handle the facts when they get them.

Thank you.

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

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

Next week begins another busy season for the Wood Island ferry and I'm reaching out to all Islanders, businesses and organizations – any individual who wants to join me on the first crossing. It's May the 1<sup>st</sup>, next Thursday, 6:30 a.m. I know there will be a

lot of questions to me about where we are with the long-term ferry contract and the federal government.

**Negotiations for Wood Island ferries**

If the Premier could give us some answers as to where we are with that negotiation.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, it was announced at the end of 2017 that Northumberland Ferries or Bay Ferries would have a two-year contract to operate that service and that, in the range or against the recent history, is some cause for confidence that we have that two-year commitment.

The larger frame, as the hon. member implies by her question, is that laid out on May 5<sup>th</sup> of last year, where the federal government is in the process of seeking a multi-year commitment on the order of 20 years and they are engaging with – as I understand it – the various bidders who might provide that service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

We all know that the ferry is a vital link for both transportation and tourism.

**Conversations with federal ministers regarding ferries**

I'm just wondering, Premier, if you could fill us in on any conversations you've had with the Prime Minister or federal cabinet ministers recently regarding the ferry.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I was in Ottawa in November and met with transport minister Marc Garneau. I've had conversations more recently with minister Lawrence MacAulay and I don't think I have to tell anyone in this House that this is a very high priority for Minister MacAulay that the federal government in all of the discussions and all of the discussions I've

had with them is very cognizant of the importance of that ferry service to the entirety of our province and notably to the eastern part of our province, in our economy and tourism and the ability of people to move back and forth and we're doing everything we can to encourage them in that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Premier, I think you attended the federal Liberal convention in Halifax on the weekend.

I'm wondering if you had any commitment from your federal counterparts at the convention on the weekend regarding the ferry.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, that particular subject did not arise in discussions there, but I can assure the members opposite and members of this House, and Islanders, that the federal government is pursuing the course of action that was laid out in May of last year and that was really historic to endeavour to have a 20-year commitment with the provision of new ferries or ferries under a certain age, and to encourage an approach of innovation in the provision of that service.

We're very optimistic that they will go through with that commitment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

We all know it's an important issue and in November 2016, I introduced a motion on the floor of this House. It was unanimously supported to create the Wood Islands Ferry Taskforce.

### **Report on Wood Islands Ferry Taskforce**

Question to the Premier: Why hasn't the report on the Wood Islands Ferry Taskforce been made public?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I have to say I'm surprised to hear, but if it's the case that it hasn't been made public we're very happy to do that immediately.

That ferry taskforce was appointed in February, met or received upwards of 50 submissions, made a report in March of last year and it seemed like – or maybe it was April – seemed like it was almost shortly thereafter that this historic commitment was made so we were very happy with the results of that work.

But as I say, if it's the case that their report, which I seem to recall seeing in this House, if it hasn't been made public then that will be done right away.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The taskforce was made up of respected business people and community leaders from the eastern end of Prince Edward Island and it's, I think, close to a year since the taskforce did their report. I'm glad to hear that you'll commit to releasing that. I appreciate that.

But, another question I had brought forward before was the fact that we still do not have a long-term contract from the ferry. We have to get through to that point, and I think it's really important that the taskforce remains intact and that they continue to do the work that needs to be done.

### **Commitment for taskforce**

I'm wondering if the Premier could make the commitment to ensure that the taskforce continues the work that needs to be done for all Islanders.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the taskforce went right to work when they were appointed. I met with them. They had, as I said, upwards of 50 submissions and prepared a report. When we appointed the regional economic advisory council for the eastern part of the province, there's some overlap in the membership between that and the ferry taskforce, and indeed the Regional Economic Advisory Council has identified the ferry service, it's important to the region and tourism, the economy, and the growth and population development in that part of the province, and strong communities.

I'm confident that that work is being carried forward through the Regional Economic Advisory Council and in all of the relationships that are involved, notably the responsibility of the federal government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

In PEI, clients seeking social assistance must liquidate all financial assets, that's assets excluding things like a house or a car or RESPs, for examples; all financial assets greater than \$50 to be eligible to apply for short-term assistance and any assets greater than \$200 to apply for long-term assistance.

After their assets have been reduced to those levels, they are then told that they are expected to take advantage of opportunities that will lead towards or establish financial self-sufficiency; at the same time, the program objectives clearly state that the program shall provide timely and appropriate services to prevent social dependency.

#### **Objectives applying for social assistance**

A question to the Minister of Family and Human Services: How do you reconcile the program's stated goals with the requirements that applicants must be utterly destitute before they can apply?

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

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

We believe in the power and potential of every human being, and ending poverty is going to start with seeing the potential and the power in people.

When I was appointed two years ago, I took an undertaking to review all of our social programs. We started with the *Child Protection Act* review. We went on to the disability support review. The Child Care Subsidy review was then reviewed, and we are currently undertaking a collaborative and comprehensive review of our social assistance programs.

I look forward to very shortly being able to roll out some of those changes that we've made.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

PEI has the lowest financial asset exemption levels in Canada. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the eligible level is \$3,000, and in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick the level is \$1,000.

#### **Financial asset exemption levels in Canada**

A question for the Minister of Family and Human Services: How can you say that you're caring for the most vulnerable Islanders while refusing to help anyone who has more than \$50 to their name?

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

**Ms. Mundy:** Mr. Speaker, to look at one aspect of a program and determine that that is how the whole program works – we are working very hard with many of our clients that are facing multiple barriers. We deal with them in a compassionate and caring way, and we have made several investments.

This budget alone is historic in comparison to what has been done in this department over the many years. This department is transforming. I'm proud to stand here today. I'm proud of the investments that we have

made in this department, and I couldn't have done it without each and every one of my colleagues on this side of the House that believe in this department, and we will see changes. We are seeing changes, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**Ms. Bell:** Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed, to the minister, that you did not address this disparity among the Atlantic Provinces in your most recent budget. After all, the economy is on a tear.

### **Review of exemption level and increased rate**

Minister: Will you commit to reviewing the exemption levels and increasing the rate to at least \$1,000?

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

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

It does give me great pleasure to rise on my feet and address that, which I did in the first – when I answered the first question. We are reviewing our programs. We will be rolling out some details in the coming weeks and coming months.

But, take a look at our Budget; an historic budget when it comes to caring for those Islanders who have less than most. We have made investments in free tuition for low-income Island students. We've increased the shelter budget; \$17 million that we will invest over the next two years for housing. These are all things that are done in collaboration and in combination with other programs.

Just to single out one investment and to say –

**Speaker:** Okay, that's enough.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Social assistance income support recipients, of whom there are over 3,700 families in PEI, are encouraged and supported to work. Yet, when they do find employment, almost every dollar of their social assistance income is clawed back, leaving them in perpetual poverty. In fact, single clients are only allowed to keep the first \$75 of any money they earn every month and 10% of any subsequent earnings each month.

### **Claw backs of social assistance**

A question for the Minister of Family and Human Services: How does clawing back their earnings encourage and empower Islanders on social assistance to move out of program dependency?

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

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

I'm glad that the hon. member feels that she knows the program so well. Maybe she might want to take a look at the pilot project that we launched last year, the Harvest and Prosper pilot project that was directed to our social assistance clients.

We went out and we collaborated with our partners in workforce and advanced learning, and in ag and fish, and we had 20 or 30 of our social assistance clients that went out there to work. They received life coaching. They received training. They received work clothes if they needed it, and transportation, and they were allowed to earn up to \$3,000 without one cent being clawed back.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, this is your first supplementary on your second question.

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

So, if 30 clients have received that fantastic support, that leaves 3,670 who didn't.

According to the Canada's social report, Welfare in Canada 2016, which I'll be tabling later, PEI has the lowest claw back threshold.

**Review of social assistance claw back levels**

A question for the Minister of Family and Human Services: When has government last reviewed these claw back levels?

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

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

This year.

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

**Ms. Bell:** Perhaps since that review is happening this year, we -

**Ms. Bell:** - must review these claw back levels.

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

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

This year.

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

**Ms. Bell:** Perhaps since that review is happening this year, we can look to both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, who have some of the lowest claw back levels, which is still higher than ours, at \$150 and 30% of remaining wages. I look forward to hearing from the minister. Perhaps you could advise us when this year we'll be hearing about that increase in rates.

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

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

When we have details, I would be pleased to stand in the House and release those.

We have been working hard behind the scenes; we have an exemptions and exceptions committee that are dealing with our clients on a one-on-one basis. So, if somebody approaches us and they have something over and above what their need might be directed under policy, we take that and we look at it and we say: Is this something that government should be involved in? And if it is, we take care of it. We take care of our clients. We are working hard to make sure that they live the best and successful life that they can. We are removing barriers that are attaching them to the workforce. It's not all just about income. There are many, many variables when it comes to poverty and our clients and we are dealing with them, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

My question is for the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

**Mr. Myers:** Good luck.

**Mr. McIsaac:** That's what I'm hoping for.

**Number of licences sold for sports fishery**

Nine days ago the stories began and now that the warm weather has hit, I'm sure the tall tales will surely start coming in even more so. I know the size of the trout that are caught may be somewhat exaggerated, but the places where they are caught are never even divulged. I don't know how many great stories we're going to hear over the summer, but I'm wondering if the minister can tell us how many licences for the sports fishery are sold each year on PEI?

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

**An Hon. Member:** Tell some fish tales.

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

We sell over 6,000 licences during the year, but I want to remind a lot of people on Prince Edward Island, we have 530 family

fishing licences. But people 16-18-years old and 60 and above get a free license, and that's about 2,700.

So I want to encourage each and every person to take advantage of fishing on our great rivers, but I also want to thank the watershed groups for providing those great river experiences for fishers all across Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

This is a sport that both, myself and my wife really enjoy. It is a sports fishery and one that many, many people across the province enjoy and a lot of the fish that are caught are actually released. Sometimes they're still allowable for the barbed hook to be used.

#### **Use of barbed and barbless hooks**

Minister: Can you tell us if the barbed hook will be done away with, or the barbless hook will be the only that they'll be allowed to use in the near future?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Barbless hooks are an excellent conservation measure for our fishermen here on Prince Edward Island. Currently, we do barbless hooks on the Trout River and the Morell River in Kings County.

By the way I was on the Morell River the other day – Monday. It's a beautiful experience out there to go up and down the river and to see people there, especially families. When you look at the fishermen sitting there in their boats, contemplating and relaxing, I would recommend that you buy eight boats for the opposition here and put them on the Morell River for a day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Before you were just buying votes, now you're buying boats.

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

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

The sports fishing industry is something that our youth really enjoy and I think we'd like to encourage a lot more of it. We saw on the floor of the Legislature last week, a young fellow here who was with the hunting and we talked about encouraging that as well. But it is such a good sport for the youth and one that we want to encourage and maybe to do that – I was just reflecting on the fact that every year there's a premier's cup given out for the largest tuna that's landed in the province.

#### **Minister's trophy for largest trout caught**

I'm wondering if we could come up with a minister's trophy for the largest trout that may be caught and kept or caught and released – just take a picture of him before hand.

**Mr. Myers:** Dynamite trout.

**Mr. McIsaac:** If that would be a possibility.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** Brownie Bowl.

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

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

That's a great idea, but I think we should restrict it to people under 16-years old because it would be far too many stories of how big the fish was that they caught – anybody over 16, so I think it would be a great idea and I recommend that any young person sends in photos of their fish and where they caught and I think that'd be a great, excellent idea that we'd probably implement next year.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

A free press and the citizen's right to speak to the press is a fundamental to our democracy.

Premier, at a backbench member meeting, I was sitting quietly, not saying a word, and your chief of staff, Robert Vessey, started shouting at me that I had a bad attitude. I asked him why and he said I talked to the press and I was not allowed to do this without party permission. My reply was that I would talk to the press anytime I wanted to. I then left the meeting; other members of the meeting were visibly upset.

### **Citizen's right to speak to press**

Premier: Were you aware that I was ordered to your office – principal's office – for behavior modification? Probably to pump up my Liberal values.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of that, but let me remind the House that on Tuesday of last week, there was a question with a long preamble. The whole premise of which was that recap was only available to Liberal members and by the end of the week we learned that that work had been distributed in ridings throughout the province, without regard to political stripe, and I expect that that's exactly what we may find is the problem with the question that's being asked today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Dumville:** Well, I mean, that's coming from a person that lost three members. Premier: Were you aware I was ordered to your office – oh, I've got the wrong question.

Premier: Do all Liberal members need to have party permission to speak to the media, or just backbenchers?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** I go back to what I just said. We started out the week last week with being told that certain things about our Liberal caucus and about phone calls that were made and I'm proud to say that by the end of the week, it seems that they whole premise on which those questions were being asked was shown to be, in the light of the facts, something that we can be proud of as a government and then that's how we approach everything. We work together as a team and we're happy to do that and we continue to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Dumville:** Premier, we're kind of getting away from whether your members can speak to the press or not.

Premier: Can your members speak to the press, or does Robert Vessey just give you executive deniability?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, as far as I can tell, our members – private members and ministers – regularly speak with media; they speak on public platforms; they speak with each other; and they speak their minds. I'm very proud of that and I believe that the people of Prince Edward Island see that and benefit from it and we are very proud of how we conduct ourselves in our public comments and in our openness and transparency.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week in the House we talked about privacy of data and data that was breached and we have more of the same this week.

### **Safeguarding of information**

Question to the finance minister: What was the weakness that was exploited by hackers yesterday?

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

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

Obviously, we take any safeguarding of Islanders' information very seriously and we're living in an age now – we're seeing it right around the world that these types of situations are bound to happen sooner or later, no matter where you are, what business you're in, or whether it's government, or municipalities, or private sector. What we can do as a government is try to ensure that we minimize those potential risks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you.

Over the last number of years, government has been encouraging Islanders to interact with them through their website by adding additional services there all the time. A lot of private information is now captured and held on the government website.

#### **Addressing data breach on government website**

Question to the minister: How will government address or be addressing this serious data breach?

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

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

Again, as minister responsible for ITSS and the hon. member used to work for ITSS; he knows full well that we take every precaution possible to minimize these situations, but we're living in a world where technology is a force. The ransom malware that was produced yesterday, we shut it down immediately and there was no information released on Islander's private information.

It's becoming a relative issue right around the world. If we just look at Facebook and what has happened there. The US, whether it be the elections in the US relevant to Russia; there are all kinds of things happening. I think we've got a great team with a public

sector, the ITSS group. We'll continue to monitor the situation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

It sounds like the minister may be blaming Russian hackers, or Donald Trump. I'm not really sure what he's talking about. This is a serious data breach. For him to stand in this House and say no data was stolen. They came in and they replace your website with ransomware. You have no idea what happened. You have absolutely no idea what happened. If they were able to get that far, then you do not know what else they did.

#### **Possible private data breach**

When will you be notifying Islanders who could have had their own data breached?

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** There is no indication that there was a breach of data. So, we've been consulting with our staff many times over the past two days, including today. There has been no indication that there has been any data breach.

You know, these cyber-attacks are going to happen. We have to be prepared for it to the best of our ability, and ensure Islanders that their information is as safe as possible and continue to build on those platforms.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

It's a pretty laissez-faire attitude by this government that hey, this stuff is just going to happen. It's the day in age that we're in and hackers are going to hack and hey, you're data is okay. This minister stands in the House and tells us: No, no. I can guarantee you. I talked to my staff and they said there was no data breach.

I'm not sure where the minister – how the

minister possibly thinks this is happening considering some of the events that have happened in the world, as of late, with data.

### **Seriousness of data breach**

Question to the minister: How come you're not taking this serious data breach much more seriously?

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

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

It's great to see the hon. member acknowledge that this does happen around the world, like I said in my previous statements.

There's no indication that private user data was breached. What we're doing is we're trying to eliminate any or minimize any possibilities of this every happening again.

The vulnerability of this happening again, from what I'm told from the ITSS people, is that it won't happen again, and they've looked after it. We're going to continue to work with ITSS and the people that know this information best and try to minimize these happenings in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

It seems to me that the minister isn't taking this as nearly as serious as he probably should be. He probably doesn't even know what data is actually stored on the server. He's relying on staff to tell him.

### **Request to privacy commissioner to investigate breach**

Question to the minister, because I believe this is a very serious thing, and I don't trust that any politician is going to give an answer to Islanders whether or not their data was actually breached. Will you call in the privacy commissioner and have her investigate this and ensure all Islanders that their data is safe?

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** The vulnerability of this attack, Mr. Speaker, has been resolved. I think, as minister, for the hon. member to stand over there and say I don't take it seriously, is completely false. I do take it seriously. I will continue to take it seriously and so does my staff take it seriously. We take all these breaches of any form of malware attacking Prince Edward Island and Islanders very seriously. If we didn't, we wouldn't necessarily be the good human beings that we want to be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you.

I know that the minister didn't answer my question. I do hope that he takes it into consideration.

For my final question, I want to ask a question to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

### **Irvings and Georgetown shipyard**

Last week, he misspoke in the House in taking about the Georgetown shipyard, but, in a very serious question: When was the last time you had negotiations with the Irvings about (Indistinct)

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

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

I'll go back to when I was economic development minister. Yes, we did have discussions with the – in the past three years with the Georgetown shipyard. We've made some major moves down there with East Isle fabrications and another company. Let me say, for the House, when Peter MacKay was minister, a federal minister, and if he wrote up the contract for the shipbuilding in Nova Scotia, he put the (Indistinct) of the shipbuilding in Georgetown.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Myers:** Robert Ghiz wouldn't underwrite the loan. You guys know this,

you know that. Robert Ghiz left him out to  
dry (Indistinct)

[End of Question Period]