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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

THURSDAY, 3 MAY 2018



Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

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

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

I had questions yesterday from the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald. As does every other province, PEI sells its debt through the big Canadian banks. A complete list of owners of the PEI debt as those of other provinces is maintained by the Canadian Depository for Securities, but that list is not available to the public or the provinces –

**Mr. Trivers:** Who are the syndicates?

**Mr. MacDonald:** We do know, based on who buys our debt, when it is initially sold; though most of it is purchased by pension funds, insurance companies and mutual funds. Islanders, as clients of these entities would indirectly hold PEI bonds.

Canadian pension funds, banks, and mutual funds buy our debt because they see us as a good investment.

Virtually, all Canadian provinces have discontinued their programs of selling debt directly to residents as administration of these programs drives up costs, which would be passed onto all our residents.

The chartered banks have well-developed efficient systems for placement of debt. We know who holds most of our debt, as we know who the largest initial purchasers are and we see it in the publicly disclosed financial statements these major institutions; banks, mutual, insurance companies. Corporate investors see us as a good place to invest.

Our bond issues have fixed interest rates and fixed maturities. These do not change regardless of who holds the paper.

The province is prudently managing its debt by keeping capital spending to what it is needed to meet the needs of Islanders and by maintaining surplus budgets.

We have the fastest growing economy in Atlantic Canada and the third-fastest growing economy in Canada. PEI is

conservative with our debt management laddering our long-term debt over various maturities to guard against interest rate spikes.

Short-term debt makes up only 8.5% of PEI's debt; one of the lowest short-term to long-term debt ratios in the country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) just the facts (Indistinct)

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. R. Brown:** They're banging at the doors of the banks wanting (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** Maybe sometime.

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

Questions by Members

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

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

As we noted last week, and in several occasions here in the Legislative Assembly, the Premier continues to be quite cagey with regards to this government's plan to tax Islanders for their carbon use.

When we asked about details, last week, around this carbon tax, unfortunately, as normal, we didn't receive any answers.

**Sign-off on tax exemptions for farmers and fishers**

Question to the Premier today: Has the federal government signed-off on carbon tax exemptions for PEI's farming and fishing industries yet? Yes or no?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the federal government's position, going back, it must be 18 months on this question is that the – going back to October, 2016, is that the pricing model that they are putting forward as a model – doesn't mean that we, necessarily, have to follow it, that, as a

model is one that would use, as its precedent the British Columbia tax on carbon. And it, indeed, does have an exemption for agriculture.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

It's interesting the Premier would use British Columbia as an example, where as they're paying over \$1.60 a litre for gasoline this week.

Every day, Islanders, use gas, in fact, to drive to work. This week we were hit with another price hike at the pumps and we're seeing record prices all across Canada.

#### **Additional cost to fuel with carbon tax**

Question to the Premier: How much more will your carbon tax add to the price of gasoline, per litre for Islanders?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the price of gasoline and, indeed, those prices were adjusted as of last weekend reflect supply and demand through the process of IRAC.

We have said, and continue to say, that we are a signatory to the Pan-Canadian framework on climate change and a clean economy. That does refer to a price on carbon, or a pricing mechanism for carbon. There are many ways to do that.

This has always got to be seen in the larger context of our commitment to reduce our carbon emissions and footprint and it's that goal that we are committed to, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

Transportation accounts for nearly half of PEI's carbon emissions at 46%, so the cost of fuel does make a difference and it does matter. Especially when some estimates suggest that a carbon tax would add, minimum of 10 cents per litre at the pump.

#### **Additional cost to diesel with carbon tax**

Question to the Premier: How much more will your carbon tax add to the price of diesel fuel for Islanders?

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

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

Transportation makes up 42%, actually, to correct the statistics that were quoted. We are, presently, as part of our Energy Strategy, have put together a transportation committee. We will be working across different processes within government, working with industry to encourage them and how we can address the challenge of transportation across PEI.

That industry is key also, to our export. We have 500 trucks that leave this province daily with exports that are over \$1 billion in exports from our industries across PEI that help drive our economy, which brings money back in here, which we can invest in programs to help incentives around carbon pricing.

Thank you.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Premier for that answer.

More and more Islanders are heating their homes with electricity. In fact, the price increase from a carbon tax will far outstrip the savings from removing the provincial portion of the HST on only the first block of electricity.

#### **Additional cost to electricity rates with carbon tax**

Question to the Premier: How much will your carbon tax add to the price of electricity for Islanders, Mr. Premier?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, there are a number of assumptions built into these questions. One is to be referring to it as a carbon tax. We haven't unveiled a carbon tax. There's this whole game here to cause fear among Prince Edward Islanders about our undertaking to reduce our carbon emissions, and we intend to live up to those commitments, and we believe that it's possible to work with Prince Edward Islanders through electrification, thank to the Leader of the Opposition for recognizing that – electrification, conservation, system management and incentives.

That's exactly what we will fully reveal and we said we'd do it before Mother's Day, and that's exactly the program that we're on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Well, the Premier talks about speculation, but where I'm getting my information from is actually the Conference Board of Canada, which is a very highly-respected organization here in Canada.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, the cost of electricity is estimated to increase by nearly 15%. That's a huge tax hit on Islanders who are already struggling to pay their bills on a daily basis.

Question to the Premier: Why do you think Islanders can swallow yet another 15% increase in the price of electricity, Mr. Premier?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, I find it quite incredulous that the Leader of the Opposition would instill fear into the hearts of Islanders and low-income Islanders.

The Maritime Electric just signed a deal with New Brunswick Power, which as a result ensures that PEI's electricity rates are not going to be affected by any increases,

which New Brunswick may incur as part of their carbon pricing mechanism. Plus, again, we're investing over \$8 million in rebates to Islanders on electricity first block, on rebates for propane, rebates for wood, rebates for pellets and I find it quite troublesome that this opposition would try to scare low-income Islanders into thinking that there –

**Mr. Myers:** Oh, calm down.

**Ms. Biggar:** – is going to be detrimental to them –

**Mr. Myers:** That's feigned anger if I ever saw it.

**Ms. Biggar:** – and we are continuing to invest in Islanders –

**Mr. Myers:** I bet you can't fake that twice.

**Ms. Biggar:** – and I find that quite troublesome.

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

**Mr. Roach:** Great job.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** You know, Mr. Speaker, what's really troublesome is the minister of transportation, from her own website, doesn't realize that transportation makes up 46% of greenhouse gas emissions on PEI.

If the Premier's going to get someone to answer his questions for him, you might as well choose someone who knows their facts.

**An Hon. Member:** That's right.

**Mr. Trivers:** Mr. Speaker, this is what respected economist Jack Mintz had to say about the carbon tax recently, quote: Governments will keep deploying costly regulations to hit emissions targets letting future politicians, as always, worry about the bills while carbon taxes, if they survive the upcoming elections, become just another government tax-and-spend slush fund.

**Concerns from economist Jack Mintz**

Question to the finance minister: How do you respond to this concern?

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

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

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

I try to read as much as I can as well, but I can tell you that I read it within the context of the evaluation of the writer and our approach will be fiscally neutral with many returns to Islanders.

We're working on many programs and it's unfortunate that the opposition doesn't believe in reducing the emissions here in Prince Edward Island like every other province in Canada is going to do.

But, we want to be a leader and we are a leader, and we'll continue to advance –

**Mr. Myers:** You hear the court challenge?

**Mr. MacDonald:** – our agenda in the interest of Islanders.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's good to hear that the Minister of Finance does respect Jack Mintz.

In fact, when this government flip flopped and put the HST on Islanders, the finance department hired Jack Mintz to do a study on potential economic impacts to help sell it.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** You of course do respect this gentleman.

**Mr. Myers:** Yes, yes you did.

### **Economic impact of carbon tax**

**Mr. Trivers:** Question to the finance minister: Will your department be retaining Mr. Jack Mintz or other economists to look at the economic impact that your carbon tax will have on Islanders?

**Mr. Myers:** Wes Sheridan is an economist.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Spin doctors.

**Mr. Myers:** You going to hire Wes Sheridan?

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

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

Eighteen of 20 of our sectors performed really well last year and we're leading the country in economic growth – or, Atlantic Canada, I should say and we're also third in the country in economic growth.

I think Prince Edward Island is doing very well, and I think with the addition of the 2018 Budget just proves to Islanders that this government has the helm and we're steady and straight ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I just want to take this opportunity to say thank you to private industry for making this government appear that they're doing anything for the Island economy.

As the Leader of the Opposition has noted, the Conference Board of Canada says that a carbon tax will lead to cost increases in electricity, clothing and footwear, food and beverages, furnishings and household appliances. This is the Conference Board of Canada.

### **Cost increases to items of necessity**

Question to the finance minister: Why does your government feel that Islanders are not paying enough for these items already?

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I'll have to go back to the minister of transportation's indication, and the Premier's, that I don't know who is talking about a carbon tax except the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Islanders.

**Mr. Myers:** Lots and lots of Islanders, they don't trust you.

**Mr. MacDonald:** We're looking at – British Columbia brought in a cap and trade. Quebec and Ontario operate a cap and trade system. British Columbia introduced a carbon tax. Alberta has implemented a hybrid system.

Prince Edward Island is unique, and we've got a good story to tell. We're further advanced than most other provinces in Canada as far as carbon pricing.

**Mr. Myers:** Thanks to the Tories.

**Mr. MacDonald:** We're going to build something that's going to satisfy all Islanders and ensure that we look out for the most vulnerable Islanders on Prince Edward Island. We have no major natural resources and yes, transportation is something that we're concerned with and we're going to deal with that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The Independent Parliamentary Budget Office, another source, estimates that a carbon tax will cost Canada's economy \$10 billion in GDP over the next five years. This government likes to talk about GDP, but \$10 billion less means less growth, less jobs and less productivity.

#### **Lost GDP growth with carbon tax**

Question to the finance minister: How much will your government's carbon tax cost the Island economy in lost GDP growth?

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

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

Again, if you want to talk about GDP – and I know it's not the most sexy topic to discuss in the general public – but as of this week, 3.2% – that's real growth on Prince Edward Island and again, the economy – I can't say it enough – is leading Atlantic

Canada in third right across the country behind two big provinces.

I think we're going in the right direction and we have all the optimism in the world and so should our constituents of Prince Edward Island, because Prince Edward Island is doing more now than they've ever done before.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The minister really is chirping about the Island's GDP growth, but we have an independent analysis from the federal government that says a carbon tax will slow economic growth. As much as this government wishes, they can't have it both ways.

A carbon tax will have impact on our jobs and on our economy. You can't escape it. That's why we have a motion before the house to compel the province to release all research, data and analysis that they have on how a carbon tax will impact Islanders.

#### **Release on information re: impact of carbon tax**

Question to the finance minister: Will you level with Islanders and release that information for all to see?

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

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

I'll take a page out of the third party's platform, basically, on economic development that this whole process on carbon pricing is going to produce – it's going to be phenomenal, and we're preparing for that and the hon. minister of transportation is putting programs together as we speak.

We want to complement carbon pricing in PEI with those advancements –

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct) more taxes, more money.

**Mr. MacDonald:** – and we'll continue to do that.

I'm not sure where the hon. member is talking, but if you look back over the past number of years, gas and diesel has gone up every year. So, this fear mongering on the opposition side is nothing more.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

So, yesterday afternoon we had a good debate concerning a motion from the minister on the Status of Women on one of the recommendations put forward in the 2009 report from the PEI Coalition for Women in Government, recommendation number four.

#### **Addressing of recommendations for women in government**

Question to the minister: Why did you fail to address and advocate for all 17 recommendations?

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

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

I will advocate for all issues related to how we can engage more women in our boards and agencies, how we can encourage more women to step forward into a political process and Mr. Speaker, I commend the work that the Coalition for Women in Government has done to promote changes –

**Mr. Trivers:** Waiting for eight years.

**Ms. Biggar:** – for barriers that have been identified, one of which is how we can restructure our sitting hours in the Legislature to have more of a life balance between family, between work, between constituencies, and I will continue to commend them and to work with them and other agencies to raise those issues and bring them forward.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So in eight years they've advocated for one of the 17 recommendations that were made in 2009. Recommendation number two from the coalition dealt with the creation of an ombudsperson office, accessible beyond regular hours in government.

#### **Advocating for ombudsperson**

Question to the minister of status of women: Why have you failed to advocate for an ombudsperson?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, in my consultations with the women's advocacy groups across PEI, this was one of their top priorities that they wanted to bring forward and how we could invoke change by all of us engaging together. Our MLAs are in our districts, as I said, by having restructuring of the sitting hours that would be able to allow us, as the minister from Borden-Carleton noted, to be out there in our – excuse me – Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** I got promoted.

**Ms. Biggar:** But to be out there engaging and promoting and all of us everyday lobby and consult and bring issues forward and we, in fact, are doing the work to raise issues and we will continue to do that.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** But the work that we did together yesterday was one of the key issues that wanted to be moved forward.

**Mr. LaVie:** You don't want to work.

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

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

I don't know why the minister won't answer my question. I asked about an ombudsperson. She's cherry-picking out of the 17 recommendations for one that she

thinks she can actually accomplish because she doesn't want to actually fight for women like she let on like she did yesterday.

In 2016, the coalition of women highlighted nine of those and sent it to the democratic renewal committee, so there are nine of them that are the top of their list.

Recommendation number three from the original report dealt with five staff constituency offices spread across Prince Edward Island and shared among MLAs to make their jobs easier, make them more accessible and have a staff to help manage their constituency work.

#### **Addressing of recommendations for women in government (further)**

Minister: Why have you failed to advocate for recommendation number three?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think as the hon. member knows, a delegation of funds to run opposition offices, third party offices –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) your priorities.

**Ms. Biggar:** – anything related to MLAs is a –

**Mr. Myers:** You're the minister of status of women, advocate.

**Ms. Biggar:** – function, certainly of the Legislative Assembly –

**Mr. Myers:** Do your job.

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, I do work every day on behalf of women –

**Mr. Myers:** Minister of excuses.

**Ms. Biggar:** – and I remember looking at that information back when Pat Binns was in government.

**Mr. Myers:** In 2009?

**Ms. Biggar:** This came to the floor then.

**Mr. Myers:** In 2009?

**Ms. Biggar:** Pat Binns' government voted against his own member for this particular issue. My caucus and the green party have come together to support this on behalf of women, on behalf of young families, on behalf of young dads, and those who want to come forward to sit in these very chairs and I'm shocked that the opposition over there won't even consider one piece of it.

**Leader of the Opposition:** (Indistinct)

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

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

The Minister Responsible for the Status of Women is being quite silly here today. She doesn't want to advocate for women at all. The reason I'm bringing these issues forward is that I'm trying to help her do her job –

**Mr. Roach:** Disrespectful.

**Mr. Myers:** Yes, I do disrespect the job that she's doing. Thank you to the member from Montague for pointing that out. She isn't doing a very good job. You're 100% right.

Recommendation number eight from the coalition of government –

**Mr. Roach:** You I was talking about, not her.

**Mr. Myers:** – was to provide a caregiver benefit to MLAs with child, or elder care giving responsibilities. Wow, wouldn't that help attract young people into politics?

Question to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women: Why is it that you don't want to advocate for recommendation number eight?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, in my role as minister of status for women, when I go to the federal-provincial delegation level, this is an issue that we brought to the federal table to have more support for child care spaces right across Canada. For more support, our government has increased child

subsidy support for women, we have increased the child care spaces – that is something I advocated at the national status of women women’s table and I will continue to advocate for those types of issues right across our government – we’re supporting those particular programs.

**Leader of the Opposition:** But not here in the Legislature (Indistinct)

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

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

The Minister Responsible for the Status of Women isn’t doing a great job advocating for women when it comes to try and help get more in government because there were 17 recommendations, one of which she cherry-picked here yesterday to try to make herself look good.

Recommendation number seven of the coalition was for government to explore and implement a PR model – something that the minister not only voted against, even though it got the most votes in the plebiscite – the flawed plebiscite that her Premier held – she still voted against it.

Question to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women: How is it that you failed so miserably in implementing recommendation number 17 of the PEI Coalition for Women in Government?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, there are many ways that we create change to have more people involved in this Legislative Assembly, one of which is the one that I put together yesterday. I find it quite surprising that that opposition over there, who are also promoting that they want more women in their caucus, aren’t even willing to support this one little thing. As you say, it’s one part.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** It’s one. It’s only one and you can’t even support it.

**An Hon. Members:** (Indistinct) Prince Edward Island for you.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct)

**An Hon. Member:** We’ll see.

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

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

The University of Prince Edward Island is primarily a publically-funded institution with the province supplying the largest share – roughly half – of the institution’s operational budget. Accordingly, government works very closely with the University of Prince Edward Island on financial matters.

### Supports for developments at UPEI

Question to the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning: What role does the province play in major developments at UPEI such as the school of sustainable design engineering?

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

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

Thank you, hon. member, for the question.

Our department and government work very closely with our post secondary institutions and UPEI is one of them. When they come forward with programs, we do what we can in our power to help support their programs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

UPEI’s latest project is to open an international campus this September in Egypt.

### New UPEI campus in Egypt

To the minister: What role is the province playing in the creation of this new campus and how much public money is involved?

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

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

Thanks again for the question.

As I indicated, our department and our government supports our post secondary institutions and I could have had the opportunity to go over there to see this new facility, but the House was opening and it was more important to be here to look after the issues of the province.

With that being said, we support their initiatives and we'll support what they're doing and if we can support them in any way in their endeavor over there, we'll continue to do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

It was interesting that you decided to stay home, minister. It's also interesting that we have heard not a thing from government about this new development – for a government that loves good news announcements, even when they have little to do with them. I'm curious as to why there's never been any announcement whatsoever about this new endeavor from the university.

Again to the minister: Is government not proud of this new Egyptian campus of UPEI?

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

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

We are very proud of what happens at UPEI and the engineering department. I was out there a couple of weeks ago to see some of the things. There are some wonderful, wonderful accomplishments that students

are doing out there. This is UPEI's project and for us to be out there talking about it when it isn't solidified yet, or all the details aren't out there yet, would be very inappropriate for us but we will continue to support the university in however we can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you.

Actually, this project is very far along. It's solidified. We know that it's going to open this September. The Egyptian state minister has a long list of human rights violations including; suppression of free speech, violence and torture against dissidents, oppression of women's rights, outlawing and persecuting homosexuality, and being the third worst country in the world for imprisoning journalists, as I explained in my opening remarks.

### **Public money and undemocratic regime**

**Minister:** Is government concerned that our province's public money and our province's identity and brand will contribute to legitimizing such an undemocratic regime?

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

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

As I had indicated before, our university does a wonderful job and the faculty out there and the president do a wonderful job of trying to garnish international students here and promote the university at large. We will continue to support the university in their endeavours to enhance the university and increase their enrollment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Indeed, the university has done a fantastic job of attracting foreign students here, making up, now, I believe 23% of the population there.

Those students, who come here on Prince Edward Island, their human rights, their workplace safety, and their freedom from sexual harassment, are protected with our laws.

### Protection in Egyptian campuses

Minister: Will Island employees, faculty and students from Prince Edward Island, who go to this Egyptian campuses have the same protections?

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

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

That's quite a question. That's a different country you're talking about. We don't know if faculty from here are going to go there for sure; they very well may be. We have our laws here and when we bring international students here, a lot of them want to stay here because of what a wonderful place this province is and how they're treated here.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** I'd say many do wish to stay here, particularly any women who might come here from Egypt.

I'd love to know more about how the UPEI administration decided that this Egyptian campus was a good idea. But, as has been brought up repeatedly in this House, post-secondary institutions are not covered by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

### Release of FOIPP review

When will government be releasing the results of its latest review of the FOIPP act, and will post-secondary institutions finally be covered?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

It is, indeed, our department that carried this consultation. It was a consultation that took place beginning over the course of this winter. A number of submissions were received, and a number on this particular point.

I would expect that we will soon see draft legislation in respect of FOIPP amendments. That is something that we would look forward to having a further discussion and debate about on the floor of this Legislature.

Thank you very much.

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

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

My question is to the minister of justice: In 2016, the PEI *Coroners Act* was amended to provide faster and better service to Islanders who were in need in a tragic time.

The amendment was to have more field investigators hired and trained, in order to lessen the wait time for everyone.

### Update on field investigators and response times

Can the minister give us an update on how many field investigators have been trained and hired and has this created the less wait time for Islanders?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

Firstly, I'd like to thank the hon. member for his advocacy on behalf of his community members in respect of this issue.

It's always tough when there's a tragic death in the community, particularly when it's an unexpected death and there is the requirement for certain investigations to take place, which would often happen through the RCMP, and then, quite often through the *Coroners Act* with coroners.

This is something that we have been looking at and we've been working with Health PEI and Island EMS to determine what we can do to train and put field investigators in

place to help to speed up response times in these cases, Mr. Speaker.  
Thank you.

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

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

Minister, yes, it's very important to have minimal wait times for the coroner's office, especially in rural PEI.

Currently, there is a new response vehicle that is stationed in St. Eleanors.

Minister: Could you tell us has this vehicle decreased wait time for West Prince residents?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

Yes, the Prince Edward Island Firefighters Association has been assisting with coroner's transportation since 2009. The service was expanded into Prince County last December.

Before this service was available in Prince County there was no established service and so we would only be relying on anecdotal reports, in terms of response times.

What I can indicate is that there have been 15 calls since this service was initiated in Prince County. With the exception of one of those – one in the 15, the response time expectation was met. In that one case it was due to a vehicle breakdown. The response time was only exceeded by a very marginal amount.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Minister, I know of more than one case where the wait time was a lot more than what was expected, or what any family should endure.

I've been in touch with you several times through email and phone trying to have concerned citizens and first responders, who came to me who wanted to have a meeting in West Prince to discuss this issue, and also their suggestion at, maybe, having a vehicle located up west may be a good idea.

### **Meeting with concerned citizens in West Prince**

Minister: Will you commit today to meeting with these concerned citizens in the very near future?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

Yes, I will make that commitment. Again, I would reiterate that the hon. member has been great to advocate for his constituents. I have also been speaking with the balance of the, what I'm going to call, the western MLAs. They have all been in touch on numerous occasions in respect of this.

It's something that we will do our utmost to ensure that we move forward with. There are a number of pieces of it. Some of them, quite frankly and simply, involve ensuring that there's a proper chain of communication when these unfortunate incidents occur. We're already taking the steps to ensure that we are doing our very best on that.

We will, certainly, endeavour to meet with the hon. member's constituents, and those of the other hon. members from the western part of the province.

Thank you.

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

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

Yesterday, parents and students of Colonel Gray High School received a notice that they had found live, unused ammunition in the school.

### **Safety and well-being of Island students**

Question to the minister of education: What precautions are being taken to ensure the

safety and well-being of Island students in our schools?

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

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

I had been alerted to this incident prior to the story having become public. It is, obviously, a concerning report.

What I can advise the House here today is that, I guess, the first thing I can advise the House is there is an embedded police officer at Colonel Gray every day; Officer Tim Keizer, he does a great job there.

This ammunition, and I think it was one piece of ammunition, appeared there on the evening previous. There has been an investigation done in respect of that by the Charlottetown city police. In fact, they had a K-9 service in the school to do as thorough a sweep as they possibly could to attempt to determine what evidence they might unearth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Fox:** Mr. Speaker, I don't care if it's one bullet or 100 bullets; it's ammunition in the school.

Everyone just wants to make sure that our students get on the bus in the morning and they are safe while they are at school. With the world evolving at a rapid pace, we need to ensure that our emergency response plans are also evolving. For example, how we evaluate technology can work for us or it can work against us in an emergency in our schools.

Have we looked at what information is publicly available about our schools online? These are all questions that should be asked.

### **Emergency response plan for schools**

Question to the minister: Who is engaged in the development of the current emergency response plan for Island schools?

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

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

That's something that I don't have right at the tip of my fingertips in terms of who would have been involved in such a process, but I will endeavour to see what I can find out about that and bring that back, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

I believe it's important to have stakeholders from all sectors involved in these emergency response plans, development and review from transportation, infrastructure, and energy to ITSS, to health and wellness – all of the departments.

### **Analysis of emergency response plan**

Question to the minister: How long has it been since we had a group analysis and critical appraisal of the current emergency response plan for our schools?

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

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

Again, I'll say I don't have the exact answer to that question right in front of me, but going by recollection this is something that we all would have heard of in the public media. My recollection is that's within the last couple of years and there's certainly been a new lockdown procedure that's been implemented, and it's actually been activated on a couple of different occasions at Prince Edward Island schools since that review has taken place. It's relatively recent, and we'll endeavour to get more accurate information on that back.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Fox:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister just talked about other jurisdictions a second ago, vaguely.

### **Geographical scan of other provinces**

Have we ever done a geographical scan of what other schools in other provinces are doing to protect their students in their schools?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** So, Mr. Speaker, this type of a policy, I should be clear to say, would be initiated, I suspect the hon. – well, I'll put it a different way.

Colonel Gray would fall under the Public Schools Branch. This would be a policy of the Public Schools Branch in terms of how it would be implemented, so I can't speak to it with a level of certainty to say where the precedence would have been obtained from or what jurisdictional scans would have been done.

Though, I do have kind of a higher-level idea that there has been such a scan done and that policy, as I indicated, has been reviewed fairly recently, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

A year and a half ago we all had Island schools evacuated due to a bomb scare. There were lessons learned about that exercise. Teachers, staff, parents, and even students publicly provided criticism and feedback on how improvements could be made.

### **Inefficiencies in emergency response plans**

Question to the minister of education: What has been done since September 2016 to fix some of the inefficiencies found in the emergency response plans?

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

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

Again, this is a plan that's administered by the Public Schools Branch in the case that the hon. member is speaking about. I think we would acknowledge that the first run through this, and fortunately the potential for a serious event did not come to fruition. It did provide some very valuable lessons that were learned, and I can indicate, again just from my knowledge in the public sphere, that there has been a great deal of work done to refine the process.

There's actually, in some instances, been subsequent incidences where this procedure has been triggered, and things have run much more smoothly in subsequent times.

Thank you.

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

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

We need our emergency response plan reviewed today, and we need individuals from all sectors and departments involved in this review. I'll tell you why.

I was shocked this morning when I did a Google search and within minutes I found detailed floor plans, maps of each of the Island schools that are publically available online, including entrances and exits to schools, classrooms, cafeterias, and even mechanical and restricted areas.

### **Detailed floor plans of schools publicly available online**

Question to the minister: Do you feel it's appropriate to have detailed floor plans of our Island schools publically available online?

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

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

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

There is some chatter going on around me in relation to this, but this does get to be the kind of conversation that we need to start to

tie together when we start looking at things like amendments to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

I will say, again, that this is a policy that's administered, in this case, by the Public Schools Branch. This is something that I can seek further information from them in respect of. I can say that there would be obvious contravening policy reasons why there might be an online presence in respect of school mapping and why there might not be.

For me to speak as to why one has prevailed over the other wouldn't be appropriate here on the floor today without knowing more about it, but I will see what I can find out.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** Final question today will come from the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Just on continuation of the line of questioning the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora had: In my district of Stratford-Kinlock, we have a very serious situation around the schools in my district and this issue is something that I've brought up with past transportation ministers, the current transportation minister, and in fact, previous education ministers.

It's unfortunate that we live in a world in this day and age where our young people are at risk, unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond our control, but the issue that I speak of today has to do with two schools in the Stratford area that have one entrance and exit only. Essentially these two schools are land-locked. There are over 1,000 children in these schools.

What I've been advocating for, for many years now, is to have Glen Stewart Drive connected through to MacKinnon Drive so that, at the very least, if an incident ever did occur at those schools and there were 1,000 kids at risk, the first responders would have more than one access to those schools.

**Safe and quicker access to schools in Stratford**

Question to the minister of education or the minister of transportation – whoever would like to answer this question: What has been done to secure these schools and to ensure that first responders have a quicker access and a safe access?

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

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

Certainly any area that we review, and in this particular instance, we have had those discussions with the town of Stratford in regard to that particular issue. We're working with them and with the school board on that particular area and we'll continue to lay plans out on how that can be accomplished, but I want to assure everyone it's certainly something that we've had discussions on.

[End of Question Period]