



Session:	3/65
Date:	18 May 2018
No:	47

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

FRIDAY, 18 MAY 2018

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Over the last couple of weeks, we have been discussing revelations about how fast and loose government has been with the management of our immigration programs. Many have pointed to the millions in PNP deposit forfeits as the reason why.

Deposit forfeits in PNP program

Question to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism: How much has government taken in from deposit forfeits in the PNP program since 2008?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our government is proud of the success that we've had in the immigration program. We have lots of new Islanders that are coming to our province every year. They are making significant contributions to our economy; to our life; to our culture. We're very glad they're here.

We know they have helped in making our population younger for the first time in 50 years, we're getting younger. That is a significant contribution. We know new housing sales are high. Car sales are high. Those are significant contributions and we are proud to continue the immigration program and have more immigrants make PEI their home.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

This minister that just stood has a perfect track record for the last two weeks of not answering a single question so I'll answer it for him.

Between 2008 and 2017, the province collected over \$102 million in deposit forfeits. \$102 million, that's a massive amount of money to take in over 10 years.

Question to the same minister: Do you think that your government has exercised sufficient oversight for a program that makes government over \$100 million in profits?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, our program continues to get better. We continue to attract new Islanders and we're very happy to have that.

Again, our population is getting younger. That's a big deal. That doesn't just happen by itself. There's a lot of hard work. We are very grateful to all the immigrants, who have come to PEI; who have helped in our economic success. We're proud that they're able to make a significant contribution to our culture, as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The minister stands and says our program is getting better. If the program was getting better, then we wouldn't have immigrants defaulting on their deposits.

\$102 million only includes the deposit forfeits.

Dollars collected from PNP deposits

Question to the same minister: How much has your department collected in interest on the PNP deposits during that time?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, the economic contributions that are made by the new immigrants coming to PEI is tremendous. We're very glad. They're making a significant contribution to our culture. They are making significant contributions to the economy. With those expansions in our economy, we are able to make key investments into things like education, more frontline workers in health care. We're able to continue to grow the economy.

I don't know why the opposition doesn't want the economy to grow and they don't want to invite a lot of new immigrants to our community; well I certainly do and this government certainly does.

Mr. MacKay: We want them to stay.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) check and look around (Indistinct)

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

Leader of the Opposition: What we think, on this side of the House, is that the Provincial Nominee Program is a good program if the government follows the rules –

Mr. Myers: They can't –

Leader of the Opposition: – but what –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Leader of the Opposition: – we're talking about here today, is not retention of immigrants. What we're talking about here today is \$102 million in deposit forfeits over the last 10 years –

Mr. Myers: Oh, shameful.

Leader of the Opposition: – and that's shameful. Again, it just clearly shows a government that's not following the rules.

This is the problem. Government's attitude is that, as long as cash is flowing, the details

don't matter. I dare say that Canada Border Services sees this differently, as well.

Question to the same minister: Can you see why so many Islanders feel like that you're using immigration simply as an ATM?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can see the opposition doesn't like the program. I don't know why they wouldn't want to –

Mr. Trivers: It's not (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – because it's continuing to –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) said.

Mr. Palmer: – grow our population –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – we're continuing to grow the economy. There are lots of new investments that are happening in the province all the time and we attribute that to a strong immigration program. We know that it's continuing to get better. Our retention rates are getting better. We're very happy the immigrants can be here to help with expanding our culture, our economy and we're very glad to have them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Again, on this side of the House, we support the program when the rules are followed. Again, we are talking about \$102 million in forfeited deposits. That's not about immigrants that are staying here. That's about immigrants that are paying a deposit, and then leaving so this government then can collect the money.

Millions in HST revenue; \$102 million in PNP deposit forfeits; soon to be tens of millions dollars in carbon tax. This government cannot keep its hands out of the

wallets of Islanders. It simply can't help itself. It's all it knows.

Trust of government in immigration program (further)

Question to the same minister: Why should Islanders have any confidence that you'll change your ways when your government is addicted to the revenue it squeezes out of Islanders?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think Islanders do have confidence in our immigration program. Our retention rates continue to climb. We continue to invest in settlement services. We invest, as well, in education. We invest in health care. We know our economy is continuing to grow. Our culture is getting more broad. We know that this is a great program and I don't understand why the opposition doesn't want this program on PEI because it makes great sense.

You can look around. Look around in the gallery today. Walk around Charlottetown. There are lots of places you can go and you can see the successes of our immigration program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm sure there are many people in the gallery today that would clearly understand that your only goal to have them here is to have your hand in their pocket; that you're not trying to help settle them here, at all.

Some Hon. Members: Oh! Oh!

Mr. Myers: As part of the Border Services investigation, there was heavy surveillance on several PNP clients on 2015.

One common thread appeared to be court documents that was an immigration consulting firm known as CanAchieve Consultants.

Business relationship to CanAchieve

Question to the minister: What business relationship does your province have with CanAchieve?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We had an open and transparent process when we engaged in improvements –

Mr. Trivers: Answer the question –

Mr. Palmer: – in our project – in our program. We have some new agents that are helping us out to continue to grow population and immigration right across PEI. We've engaged communities so they can welcome immigrants to it. I don't know why the opposition, maybe, in Georgetown they don't want immigrants, but I can tell –

Mr. MacKay: Oh, come on –

Mr. Palmer: – you in Summerside, they certainly do. We'd invite them –

Mr. Myers: We do.

Mr. Palmer: – in Summerside.

Mr. MacKay: (Indistinct) give your head a shake (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's a pretty weak answer. Number one, I live in Cardigan. I don't know how you can brand entire Georgetown based on a question I asked you about somebody who was cheating the system. I'm not sure: do you think we're all cheats in Georgetown, or what? But, that's your cross to bear, not mine.

According to the court documents – so this is all court documents that we received. Border Services has under surveillance this Kowloon office of CanAchieve Consultants.

Question to the economic development minister: Has your government ever had a direct business relationship with CanAchieve?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, our office has a lot of engagement with a number of agents. We continue to work to bring the very best immigrants to PEI that we can. We have a new expression of interest model. We encourage immigrants to work with municipalities; to talk about their business plans; to go into other communities, so that they can spread the wonderful cultural experiences that they have, and can help with our economic development in all of our communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

CanAchieve, their website lists a range of services for potential clients: free pick-up service, free assistance to customers to arrange temporary accommodations, free assistance to clients with viewing and renting.

Foreign immigration companies and support to PNP clients

Question to the economic development minister: How do foreign immigration companies like this work with your government to support PNP clients?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, we continue to support immigrants as they come here to PEI. We want this to be their home. We want them to stay here. We know that they fill important labour gaps for us. They continue to grow the economy. We need new people coming to the province to help us grow our business so we can expand our exports – which we've done for four years in a row and we're going to continue to do that.

We know that immigration is an important component of that and we're very happy that we can continue to do that and we're very welcoming to immigrants.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So if the government really believed in immigration and they really believed that they want to have immigrants in this province, they wouldn't be charging them \$200,000 a head to get them here. It's a scheme that government has to put money in their own pockets and their friends' pockets.

CanAchieve website also promotes free assistance to customers in opening bank account, free assistance for bank loans, introducing free, reputable accountants and lawyers.

Question to the economic development minister: Does this sound like the type of firm we want associated with PEI's immigration program?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We continue to invest in settlement services. We want immigrants to stay in PEI. We want them to continue their lives here to make our lives richer, to make our economy grow, to fill key labour gaps, to give us new business ideas, to help us increase our exports, to do all of the things that we see are happening right across PEI that's making this more of a dynamic place to live and we know that a key component of that are the new immigrants that come to our Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For some reason the minister is completely avoiding my questions and he doesn't want to answer. He's getting some advice from

the former minister there now so maybe he'll be able to answer the next one. The member from Montague had his hands in this too. It appears that he doesn't want to answer it.

All I want to know is why there's an immigration company that's in China that isn't an intermediary here on Prince Edward Island – has a direct linkage into our system. I only found this by court documents. We went down to the court and got the documents. This isn't something – I'm not inventing this. This is part of the border security investigation. This is part of the federal government's concerns. This is part of the reason why you need to clean up your act.

Clearly, these PNP clients end up investigated because some of the work of this CanAchieve company. CanAchieve website also hails our social safety net here in Canada and it refers to it as 'milk gold', believe it or not. Are you comfortable, minister, with companies promoting citizenship to Canada in this fashion?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, I'm very comfortable with our economy continuing to grow. I'm comfortable that our culture is growing, that new immigrants are coming here. They're raising their families, their kids are going to school, we're learning from their culture, they're opening business, they're helping export, they're filling major labour gaps that we have.

We're also to make contributions to additional settlement services so that they can stay here. We're making contributions to the education system and to the health system so that we can provide the very best service we can so immigrants will continue to stay here in PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So the minister appears to be very comfortable at making all these things happen at all costs – even the cost of the

reputation of Prince Edward Island, even the cost of the reputation of the immigration program here on Prince Edward Island. None of those things seem to matter to him because they're addicted to the money that they're getting by charging \$200,000 a head. So much so they're willing to allow companies in China to promote our social programs as 'milk gold' to come to Canada. Come and get free everything. CanAchieve also promotes free assistance for clients for social insurance and medical cards.

PEI's reputation in immigration

Question to the economic development minister: Do you think international companies that market immigration this way helps Prince Edward Island's reputation in immigration, or hurts it?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, I don't understand why the opposition doesn't seem to be able to grasp this program. It may be back to their roots in the Conservative Party and they follow along with Stephen Harper culture of defeatism, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: Because things are good in PEI. I don't know why they can't get it. It's okay that –

Mr. Myers: Watch Trudeau get pounded in the next election. Watch Trudeau get pounded (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – we've got four years of consecutive export growth, four years of consecutive tourism growth. We're continuing to get better and it's okay, it's okay that we're getting better. Don't be afraid of it. It's very good. It's good in the economy. We're continuing to grow and we're going to continue to do that through our population action plan.
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Ms. Biggar: Just getting warmed up.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As Islanders open their property tax bills in the mail this year, for the first time ever, they're finding an extra gift – an extra gift from this government in the form of an election-style brochure.

Mr. Myers: Oh.

Property tax bill and election brochure

Mr. Trivers: Question to the finance minister –

Mr. Myers: Shameful.

Mr. Trivers: – did your office sign off on this election brochure, or did this idea come straight from the fifth floor?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: I think it's important to note that not everybody reads brad.com and we need to get the message out. We had one of the most successful budgets in the history of Prince Edward Island and we want to ensure that everybody's aware of all the investments that this government has made to make – first of all: seniors, most vulnerable Islanders, students and those with mental illness – to make them aware of the programs that are available to them. We know that they're going to get the message because the opposition's not going to deliver the good news.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) a budget.

Mr. R. Brown: Post it on brad.com

Mr. Trivers: Yes.

Mr. Henderson: He probably scanned it and posted it.

Mr. Myers: They're rowdy over there today, Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, it's bradtrivers.com, just for the record. At any rate, for 150 years, Islanders received their tax bills. There was no political propaganda in it. This is a blatant

attempt to influence Islanders. The only thing that's missing from this brochure is the Liberal logo. Tens of thousands of these brochures were included in this year's property tax mail.

Cost of brochures to Island taxpayers

Question to the finance minister: How much did these brochures cost Island taxpayers?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

I fully understand that the opposition's not pleased with the way the budget has come out and to start nitpicking on how we deliver the message to people across Prince Edward Island, I think it's more important for everybody to go back to the constituencies and tell people about the personal exemption; to tell people about the reduction in electricity; tell people about the small business corporation tax reduction; tell people about the \$4 million in mental health; tell people about the \$32 million investment in health care.

But, I will say this, that: When you have the opportunity to help Islanders, you do it, and that's exactly what we're trying to do.

Mr. Myers: 500 meters of pavement (Indistinct) call an election.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, I mean, the strategy's pretty simple: Take taxpayer dollars, spend it to simply try to buy their votes in the next election.

Mr. Myers: Oh, that's exactly what Liberals do. (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, I really don't think Islanders are falling for it. Production and distribution of a mail-out this size, it would cost thousands of dollars.

Mr. Myers: Yes, hundreds of thousands.

Mr. Trivers: The minister didn't answer the question, but I think it'd be thousands.

Question to the finance minister: Why do you consider this a responsible use of taxpayer dollars?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Actually, taxes being mailed out are actually free, hon. member.

This morning I was reading and listening to the radio about Atlantic provincial economic council and it's unbelievable; the first four months of 2018, we're up in weekly earnings, we're up in job gains by 3%, our employment rate is up 2.6% – double the national average.

Mr. R. Brown: Oh, great.

Mr. MacDonald: We're the third fastest growing economy in Canada, the first in Atlantic Canada. We're doing things right and that's why.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: Three balanced budgets.

Mr. Trivers: Three balanced budgets?

Mr. Myers: Zero balanced budgets.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, I'd hardly call a full-colour brochure 'free' when it's printed. I'm not sure where the finance minister is trying to go with this 'free' angle.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: But normally, these types of mail outs would be done by a political party at their own expense.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: This is the same government – you can barely turn on the radio without hearing one of their ads. Their ads are plastered all over Facebook and the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island are paying for them.

Mr. Myers: They are. Yeah, they are.

Mr. Trivers: I want to know –

Mr. R. Brown: Is that all you do on the Internet?

Advertising with taxpayers' dollars

Mr. Trivers: Question to the finance minister: Why does your government keep blurring the line between public and partisan advertising with taxpayer dollars?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to see the hon. member got the brochure and I hope he circulates it to everyone in his community and everyone in his riding, because it's extremely important that we get the message out. It's extremely important that these programs get utilized, and we save every cent that we can save for each and every Islander from one end of the Island to the other because that's the type of government we are. We're helping as many individuals –

Mr. Fox: Tax, tax, tax.

Mr. MacDonald: – as possible and we're continuing.

If the hon. member keeps chirping tax, tax, tax – yes, we did reduce the taxes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: And electric rates.

Ms. Casey: Zing. That's a zinger.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) expansion.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) again.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) all that money (Indistinct)

Speaker: Okay, I think there's another member wants to ask a question.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, I asked the Premier a number of questions relating to the extraordinarily short time period between the introduction of his election system referendum act and the appointment of the first commissioner.

He didn't seem to think there was any undue haste, although if even one-tenth as much urgency had been placed on hiring a registrar for the registered health professions act, there would be a lot of happy midwives and parents in the province right now.

Premier, you clearly described the process to get from where we are to where we need to be. You said: First we have to pass the bill, at which point the Legislative Management Committee will have a job to do, at which point the Legislature will have a job to do, to consider a resolution and at that point, perhaps the rumour mill will move onto something else.

Appointment of referendum commissioner (further)

It is exactly two weeks until June 1, 2018. Do you actually think a commissioner will be in place in two-weeks' time?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, to pick up the opening theme of the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale about haste, I recall on the 9th of November, 2016, that the Leader of the Third Party introduced a motion to implement a whole new electoral system for Prince Edward Island and they were through talking about in about seven minutes.

So, maybe they want to go back and look at their own timelines and see what a rush they were in in the fall of 2016.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Registration deadline for referendum advertisers

Also to the Premier: If it is not possible to have a commissioner in place by June 1st, how will eligible referendum advertisers register by the July 1st deadline?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I think the question, the supplementary question, answers the first question. There's a reason we need a referendum commissioner, which is its integral to the whole administration of the law that will be brought in place by this bill.

May I remind the member, and I'm sure I don't have to remind anyone else in the House, that sometime within the next, whatever, several weeks, this House will finish its spring sitting. It is anticipated that that bill, which has been introduced, will be adopted in some form by this House and it will be highly desirable to have a referendum commissioner in place to implement and to lead the administration of that law.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, I wondered why there was so much haste when our next election isn't scheduled until October 2019, and I asked whether the Premier intended to call an early election. He refused to answer.

Confirmation of election timeline (further)

Once again, Premier, I'll make this a really simple and clear question: Do you intend to call an election between now and the end of 2018? No or yes?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I'm glad to note that I was given the choice of answers in alphabetical order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: I will also remind the House, as we have before, that our elections act offers a number of options when it comes to when the next election may take place, and that includes retaining the constitutional ability of the Lieutenant Governor to act to initiate an election –

Mr. MacKay: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – and our *Election Act* did not take that away, nor have other election acts across the country. I think most of us can see that in the fall of 2019 there's another election taking place and I hope all of us will have that in mind.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question this morning is to the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Minister, I was pleased to hear that our province over the last few years has created 4,000 new jobs, including 3,500 full-time jobs. However, this is the time of the year where students –

Mr. Myers: Mike Currie created 30,000.

Ms. Casey: – are trying to secure their summer employment, and there are lots of great jobs in our province for students.

It can be overwhelming for a student sometimes to know what all their options are.

Summer employment for students

What is your department doing to make this process easier for students to find a job?

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

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

Thank you, hon. member, for the question.

As was indicated earlier, Prince Edward Island is leading the country in many ways

and thanks to the business community things are very busy out there in our Island economy.

Yes, I do agree with the hon. member. It can be confusing for students sometimes to navigate the job market and we understand that. We're trying to do better by streamlining the application process through government. We do encourage the use of the employment assistance services such as Career Development Services Inc. to help these students navigate the process.

They can also contact workpei.ca as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, some of the concerns that I've heard – and I know you said you were going to streamline the application process – students are telling me that there are multiple applications to apply for a job with the same employer, our provincial government.

In streamlining that application for students, does that mean that you're going to make it one application where a student looking for a post-secondary job or Jobs for Youth will be able to fill out just one application and maybe check a couple of boxes that makes it easier for the student to have an application processed by the province?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I had indicated earlier, yes, we are trying to streamline this to make the process easier for students and as a first step, we've combined two applications into one and we're looking at collaboration with other departments. So by this time next year, we may have an easier process for students to apply for jobs in government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Students, besides looking for a job with our government in the summer, are also looking to work either in the private sector or in the community.

Options for student applying for jobs

What options does your department have to help a student find the job in those sectors?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are many job opportunities and right now there are approximately 2,000 jobs on PEI registered for students, or any Islander, to apply for. We recently invested \$1 million in extra funding for these sector councils and groups to help students get jobs, and the Jobs for Youth and the post-secondary programs are very important for students and for the business community and private sectors for students to get summer employment.

I encourage all Island students looking for work to check out the different programs such as Team Construction, Team Seafood, Team Trucking and the new Team Farming program we have in place.

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 Family and Human Services.

Minister: I asked the minister of infrastructure last week about the new manor in Montague. She affirmed that it will be completed in 2019. This means when residents move into the new one, the old Riverview Manor will be empty.

Plans for old Riverview Manor in Montague

What plans does your department have in place for this old manor?

Mr. R. Brown: Good question.

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The manor is currently owned by the PEI Housing Corporation. We are in close contact with our colleagues over at transportation, infrastructure and energy and we are very aware of the timelines for when the residents of the old manor will be moving into the new manor. We are keeping an eye on that.

However, there are a number processes and steps that we have to go through before we determine what we will be doing with that manor. Because we can't do anything with it until the clients move out.

The first step is to take a look at all the government departments to see if there is any need, if there is any interest within government and we will be starting that process very shortly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for that answer. I take it from the answer that you will be able to go internally before they actually move into the new manor. I hope that's the case.

Minister: there's a lot of information out there, a lot of people are talking about it. Has there been any interested parties stepped forward and approached your department with respect to taking ownership of that property, or possibly doing something with it?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With all of the talk about the provincial housing action plan, there has been a lot of discussion out there about housing and the housing needs on Prince Edward Island.

Yes, we have been receiving numerous calls about, not only that manor, but we've been also receiving calls from many communities across Prince Edward Island, who are interested in helping Islanders with their housing needs. We are very open to partnerships. We are very open to investment.

Actually, I've met with community groups in O'Leary, in Georgetown. I've met with community groups in Bedeque, as well as helped the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River to create a questionnaire to send out to residents in their community.

Housing is a priority for this department. We will continue to meet with developers and if you have any developers that are interested in meeting, please, send them my way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With that, and it's great to hear, that that's taking place. Should no other internal government departments show interest in the property, at what point, then, will your department turn the property over to the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

RFPs and interests for Riverview Manor

How quickly will it be, at that point, that we can expect request for proposals, or expressions of interest to be put forward, kind of, in a public manner?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's very important to note – I thank you for the question, I thank you for your passion and advocacy for your community.

I think we're a little bit too soon to ask when an RFP. We still haven't determined whether or not that piece of property is something that we want to deem surplus. It is a very important piece of property. We are still on the internal, I guess, discussions with our department as to whether there is a need.

We have a provincial housing action plan that we will be launching very shortly and that property is one of the properties that we are discussing as part of that action plan.

I want to assure the hon. member that housing, again, is a priority. I think it is very evident in the third consecutive balanced budget that we did present a little over a month ago, and the investments that are making in housing on Prince Edward Island to help those, who need it most.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Actually, if I could beg with a little bit of indulgence for me for recognition of guests?

Speaker: Go ahead, hon. member.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Speaker: No, not until after Question Period.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

On April 11th, I asked the Attorney General for a breakdown of how much Island taxpayers have spent on legal fees for government and people named in the defendants of the \$50 million e-gaming lawsuit.

His words were: I don't have the direct answer to that question with me here today but I will see what I can do to get that information and bring it back.

Dollars spent on legal fees on e-gaming lawsuit

Question to the Attorney General: It has been five weeks now that you've been

dragging your feet on bringing back this information, what are you hiding?

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

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

I stand by that commitment. I'd note that this is a matter that's before the courts and it's ongoing. Cost is, in fact, a matter that would as well be before the courts. We will do what we can to get information back to the House in a timely manner on that matter and I stick to that.

Thank you.

Mr. R. Brown: Good.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, you'd be guaranteed the lawyers involved are putting in their claims to you guys as quick as possible, so you should have the answer.

Along with the province, 13 other people were named in the \$50 million lawsuit. These include; lawyers, a premier, two Cabinet ministers, former deputy ministers, three former MLAs involved with the government, and five current deputy ministers all being represented by the same lawyer.

Tabling of breakdown for e-gaming lawsuit

Will you table a breakdown on legal expenses for defending your \$50 million e-gaming lawsuit, I asked for five weeks ago?

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

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

I would just like to be careful in noting that there are numerous lawyers involved. Government lawyers are defending government actors, or members in relation to this matter. There are separate counsels for other folks that have been involved in the lawsuit.

Certainly, as I indicated, we will get a breakdown at an appropriate time for this matter. It's a matter that's ongoing; cost is a matter that is dealt with by the court. At an appropriate time, legal bills are put before the courts for consideration. We've seen that government has been awarded costs previously in relation to this matter and we will get information related to that back.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, it's like the debt clock is bradtrivers.com, it's going so fast, you can't keep track, probably.

Some (Indistinct) have noted a similarity between the e-gaming and the Ontario gas plant scandal with the respect to the destruction of personal and government public documents.

RCMP and OPP criminal investigation

Question to the Attorney General: Can you confirm today whether the RCMP consulted with the Ontario Provincial Police to tap into special expertise investigating criminal destruction of documents at the highest level of governments?

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

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

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

I'm not going to get into arguing this matter here in this Chamber. It's a matter that's before the courts. I would note that is has been reviewed by the Auditor General and it has been reviewed by the RCMP. We will continue to let the lawyers that we have retained to do that work; do their work in the courts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Let's be very clear: the Auditor General had a lot of concerns. The courts

must have a lot of concerns because it's back before the court.

The similarities between the e-gaming and the Ontario gas plant scandal are striking; improperly destroyed public documents in the premier's office; criminal or civil legal actions as a consequence.

Question to the Attorney General: With all of these similarities, do you think the OPP should have been consulted by the RCMP for their expertise in document destruction?

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

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

I certainly am not going to get into speculating as to who the OPP should have consulted in relation to an investigation in an entirely different province.

I would note, in respect to the question or the preamble to it, that this lawsuit is a matter that was brought forward by an individual or a company that came to Prince Edward Island and did not pan out the way that they were supposed to. It's an action that he's taking as a result of that.

We will continue forward with our defence of this in the courts and we will, again, let the lawyers that we have retained to carry that defence do their work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Let's be clear, we're not talking about the OPP consulting with the RCMP; we're talking about very similar events in two provinces. The question was: Did the RCMP consult with the OPP on a similar matter? We don't know the answer.

The appearance of impartiality is an important principle in justice, that's why the Attorney General recused himself as vice chair of the Public Accounts when the committee's review of e-gaming bumped up against potential legal conflicts that the minister properly declared.

Destruction of public documents re: e-gaming

Question to the Attorney General: Will you consider making and asking an independent prosecutor to review these matters involving improper destruction of public documents in the e-gaming scandal?

Mr. Myers: Oh, he can't answer. He can't answer it.

An Hon. Member: Whoa.

Mr. Myers: He's tied too close to it.

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to respond to this, which I have before in the House and at Public Accounts, actually. I will read a quote from the Auditor General, who said: For us to complete our work and issue the report, the work we did was sufficient in terms of who we interviewed and the questions we asked.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: I have the list here of the 56 people that were interviewed by the Auditor General and I also have – if anybody wants to hear the answer to this, which was a published report by CBC on April 12th by the RCMP

An Hon. Member: Can't get any better than that.

Mr. Palmer: – that said: After an extensive investigation into allegations in relations to what is known as e-gaming, including conducting over 50 interviews, there was no evidence of criminality or grounds to lay any charges – which I'll be happy to table as well.
Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I see we have a new Attorney General.

Many Islanders are asking how two very similar situations resulted in such different investigative outcomes. Two almost exact same events with just two different companies, basically. They cooked the books and they destroyed documents.

Some Hon. Members: Oh!

Ms. Casey: Unparliamentary.

Mr. Fox: They went and investigated it.

Mr. Myers: Absolutely.

Ms. Casey: Unparliamentary.

Mr. Fox: Question to the Attorney General

—

Mr. Roach: No confidence (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: Can you explain why the illegal destruction of public documents — let's be clear, the destructing of public documents in the Premier's office — is a crime in Ontario, but it's not in Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety, and the Attorney General.

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

I must say that I do find the hon. member's statement somewhat troubling and I will say that is what I would say they are: statements.

Mr. Myers: We get it.

Mr. J. Brown: Coming from a former chief of police, I would have thought that there would be more respect for his fellow police officers in the RCMP. As I said, there have been investigations conducted in relation to this matter by the Auditor General and by the RCMP. The hon. minister of economic development read out the quote from the RCMP indicating that they did not feel that there was any evidence —

Mr. Fox: Cover-up, cover up.

Mr. J. Brown: — that would result in charges, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Roach: By the RCMP?

Mr. Fox: Cover up.

Mr. J. Brown: That speaks for itself.

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: I have confidence in the RCMP in this province.

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: I don't care where you (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: I will reaffirm my confidence in the RCMP here today. It would be nice if we could get off of this trend of a lack of confidence in public bodies in this House, which seems to be ongoing this session.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: Can't wait to tweet that out.

An Hon. Member: Go ahead.

An Hon. Member: You don't tweet.

Mr. Roach: I'm going to now.

Mr. R. Brown: Once he gets an account.

Mr. Myers: Go and open an account right now.

Ms. Casey: Alroach.com.

[End of Question Period]