

Witnesses still wanted

Opposition MLAs pushing for e-gaming players to be called to public accounts

The Guardian (Charlottetown) · 18 Feb 2017 · BY TERESA WRIGHT Teresa.wright@tc.tc [Twitter.com/GuardianTeresa](https://twitter.com/GuardianTeresa)

Opposition MLAs are once again calling for key players in P.E.I.'s e-gaming scandal to be called as witnesses to the province's public accounts committee as questions continue to swirl over deleted government emails.



The committee has been scrutinizing the auditor general's special audit report on e-gaming, which included findings that government emails, which should by law have been retained, were deleted.

Earlier this week, the committee held its seventh meeting on the e-gaming report, drilling into the minute details about how the government emails were deleted, who authorized what and how retention of government records was being monitored at the time.

Auditor general Jane MacAdam stated repeatedly during the meeting her audit found records management "has not been a priority of government."

"It was concerning for sure, that's why it's in the report," MacAdam said.

The deleted emails in question belonged to the former premier's chief of staff, Chris LeClair, former deputy minister Melissa MacEachern and former clerk of executive council Rory Beck. MacAdam determined that emails belonging to these individuals involving e-gaming did exist at one time because she received copies of their email conversations from other sources. But when she asked for records for these individuals during her investigation, she was told none existed. This is a direct contravention of the Archives and Records Act.

Opposition MLA and committee chairman James Aylward says he remains baffled that no one is being held responsible for destroying government records.

"I guess I just fail to understand why someone is not being taken to task because all correspondence for these individuals were essentially expunged. They just disappeared, whether it was deleted as an email or it was taken out to a shredding machine or whatever," he said.

Opposition MLAs have been trying for months to call LeClair, MacEachern and other key players in the e-gaming file to committee, but these attempts have been repeatedly thwarted by the Liberal majority on the committee.

Green Leader Peter Bevan-Baker says he feels there are still many unanswered questions about this controversial file, which could only be answered by those directly involved.

“I feel if we are to do our job properly, we have to ask those questions, and if we can’t get them through records, the only other way of doing it is to be face-to-face with these people as witnesses in front of this committee,” Bevan-Baker said.

“It’s a continual frustration for myself and some of the other members of this committee that the Liberal majority is blocking that action.”

Meanwhile, Liberal MLAs on the committee have grown increasingly frustrated by the deluge of questions being posed by the Opposition on the e-gaming report, often pointing out when questions are being repeated or requesting the committee move on to the next section of the report.

Liberal backbencher Kathleen Casey took it upon herself to list all the actions government is taking to address the AG’s concerns about records management, including listing the details of a three-year strategy announced in the fall session of the legislature.

“We can be fully comfortable with the fact the Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture have heard and are fully aware of what had gone, on and I’m quite comfortable with the strategy to move forward that we have a robust system so that this won’t happen again,” Casey said.