



Session:	4/62
Year:	2006
Date:	8.12.06
No:	13

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

TRANSCRIPT OF
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS
AND THE
ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
FOR

Friday 8 December 2006

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 8 DECEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

ISLANDER WITH VANCOUVER CANUCKS

Mr. McCardle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Recently, 21-year-old Nathan McIver of Kinkora made his NHL debut with the Vancouver Cannucks. This is Nathan's second season with the Manitoba Moose. Nathan was recalled from the Moose and suited up for the game against the league leading Anaheim Ducks.

Although the game was uneventful for the Canucks, Nathan tried to rally the troops and was joined on the blue line by fellow rookies, Patrick Coulombe and Alex Edler.

After being drafted in the second round of the 2002 OHL from the Summerside Junior program, Nathan made his OHL debut with St. Michael's Majors in the 2002-2003 season. He was selected by Vancouver in the eighth round in 2003.

Nathan is the product of a very successful minor hockey program in Kensington and is a graduate of Kinkora Regional High School.

This 6'2", 195 pounder is a solid defenseman with good skating skills and always played well as he progressed through the ranks. He is a team leader and although not a heavyweight, he certainly can hold his own in the fighting department.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Nathan on his

success to date and wish him well as he continues with his hockey career.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Fortune Bay.

M A T I N E E R A C E T R A C K DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Ms. Crane: Mr. Speaker, there's nothing like a day at the races and for many of us growing up on Prince Edward Island, the local matinee track was the place to be on Saturday or Sunday afternoon. The matinee tracks of Prince Edward Island are steeped in a tradition that has not changed in hundreds of years. The races were held for enjoyment and horses came from miles around to compete. Drivers from teenagers to seniors learned the ropes of harness racing and these tracks have been the training ground for some of the big names in the industry, such as: Mark MacDonald, Paul MacKenzie, Garry MacDonald, and others.

The people in my district will remember the race days at the Central Kings Driving Park and if it's up to Faye Webster and her new board of directors, people like Claude Matheson and Randy Blaisdale, this matinee track will be brought back to its old glory and more.

Other tracks are also involved in this matinee track development project. They are Pinette, Tyne Valley, O'Leary, Kensington, and Alberton. A new website is up and running

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 8 DECEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS

and a Magical Summer day Camp for kids age 10 is up in the works. What a great way to spend a family vacation together and another reason why Prince Edward Island is such a great place to live.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate all those involved with this Matinee Racetrack Development Project from across the Island and, in particular, Faye Webster - Faye and I actually have grown up together and have been good friends since she was six years of age - and her committee from Central Kings Driving Park from my district. Faye and her husband, Trevor Easter, also have a private sector horse farm in the district. And Faye's passion has always been horses and it's so nice she's giving this contribution to the community with her leadership.

Thanks for bringing back this century old legacy of harness racing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

CHANCES' CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I would like to rise and recognize CHANCES family centre. And as many of us know, it's a non-profit organization that offers programs for families with pre-school aged children, including pregnant mothers to be. And they offer programs not just at their location on the Brighton Road but also along, around the province.

And I'd just like to highlight some of the programs that they do offer. They offer programs for parenting children, which offers a range of programs for parents and children that are focused on parenting, personal growth, and child development. They offer Canada pre-natal nutrition programs which offers information and practical support to parents through the pre-natal period. They offer Best Start, which is a province-wide intensive screening assessment and in-home visiting program targeting children from birth to toddlers and working with their parents as well. They have early learning centres which provide care during the day for children in a stimulating and nurturing environment, a maximum number of 12 children which participate in this program, and also a volunteer program that are essential components of the day-to-day operations of CHANCES and significantly contribute to the overall success of this organization.

And I think the testament to the success of this organization is its staff. Anne Robertson, who is the executive director of CHANCES, does a tremendous job and they employ a lot of people under the different programs across the province. And I think on behalf of all members, we'd like to congratulate them as well as those that share in the programs, the drop-in place (indistinct) in West Royalty, Hunter River, Cornwall, Rustico, and Stratford which are offered through the year and are wonderful opportunities for children and parents to go.

But finally, I'd like to end with the Christmas party, which is coming up, and it's on Thursday, next Thursday, December 14th from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. And it's at the Basilica, formerly the Basilica Rec Centre, the

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 8 DECEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS

Murphy Community Centre, and it's for parents and children that are from birth to six years to age. They invited to come and celebrate the joyous family occasion and there will be art activities, music, snacks, and even maybe a special visitor. So that's next Thursday from ten to one and I would just like to provide for the public the phone number for CHANCES resource centre - 367-6744. Please take advantage of programs that are being offered; they're great.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Questions by Members starting with Responses to Questions taken as Notice.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

We debated a resolution in this House yesterday which would have given the members on that side of the House an opportunity to come clean about the massive discrimination against hundreds of Islanders following the current government coming to power in 1996. The members over there failed to do so. They ignored an opportunity to be accountable.

Mr. Speaker, a question for the minister of education and the Attorney General of Prince Edward Island. Following the 1996 election, did you help in identifying the names of Islanders you believe deserved discrimination?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and

Attorney General.

Ms. Dover: Mr. Speaker, no, I did not.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I've now got a question for the Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs. What about you? You were elected in 1996. Did you help to compile the names of Islanders you believed weren't fit to work for the government?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs.

Mr. MacFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No, I'm appalled at the question.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

HUMAN RIGHTS' CASES

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

A question for the Provincial Treasurer. Back in 1997, you were the minister who brought in the amendments to *The Human Rights Act*. For days on the floor of this Legislature, you defended those amendments. In 2002 Supreme Court decision said the following: There is no question that the government action of discrimination against the applicants regarding their employment as casual employees is in violation of *The Human Rights Act*. Mr. Minister, do you believe in that assessment?

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 8 DECEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Well, I think what the court said at that time, the question was on the amount concerning the cap what was available for payout to settle the cases at the time. I think that was the decision of the court at that time of course. Since that time, that's been through various appeals and procedures to where it is today where I believe that there are 11 individuals left and negotiations are going on between representatives of those individuals and government.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Supplementary for the Provincial Treasurer. I'm wondering: Did the treasurer help to draw up lists of Islanders who deserved to be discriminated against?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Of course not, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

A new question now for the Minister of Transportation and Public Works. Back when the purge took place, I believe the minister was an employee of the Premier's office. We know that court documents identify the Premier's office as a major player in the purges. Was the minister involved in that process at the time?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works.

Ms. Shea: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In my role in working in the Premier's office, I met with many Islanders and I forwarded their concerns on to government.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'll ask the Minister of Development a question now and the author of one of the most infamous quotes in modern political history on Prince Edward Island. Back in late 1996, early 1997, the minister said that he was going to look after his own. Did the minister assist the Premier's office in identifying Islanders he considered unworthy of working in the public sector?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Development and Technology.

Mr. Currie: Mr. Speaker, I think this is an issue that probably both parties have been involved with over the past and, certainly, I think it's an error that's behind us. I think that I find it quite ironic that the member himself is asking the questions who is an individual who has been bathed in patronage. He was brought up in patronage. He got his first job in Brudenell, no resume, no interview, just a phone call. He got his next job in Sheila Coppins' office - no resume, no interview. He got a phone call from the good Member from North River-Rice Point, made a job for him. Then he was appointed to the Prime Minister's office, probably no interview, no resume, just a phone call was made. So I find it very ironic that he would get up and make statements like this in the House.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 8 DECEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

And I just want to point something out before I go to my next question and that is on the floor of this Legislature, you're able to say anything without being fear, without being in fear of being sued. And what the minister just said was totally incorrect and I challenge him to say that outside the Legislature because I'd love to take every penny he's got because he knows it's not true.

Mr. R. Brown: Say it. Say it.

Leader of the Opposition: I've now got a question for the minister of agriculture. Following the 1996 election, the minister was a backbencher. Did he take part in identifying Islanders who didn't pass the Tory employment test?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Bagnall: Mr. Speaker, you know, when we got elected, when I got elected as an MLA, I had hundreds of people come into my office looking for work and looking for me to try to find the work. I guess my understanding and my philosophy always has been anybody comes in my door I try to help.

And so Mr. Speaker, did I take part? No, I didn't. I did not discriminate against anybody. I did not ever turn down anybody that came in my office. If anybody came in looking for help, I tried to help them to the best of my ability and I think if the member wants to check down in my district, my record will

speak for itself and he'll find out around the district that that is the case.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

But according to affidavit evidence, the minister was involved and to quote: I became involved in politics out of my belief in the local candidate. In the past, I have voted for the Premier in federal elections. I often dealt in my position with MLAs but was never pressured to hire people due to party allegiances. I was never asked my personal party allegiance until May of 1997 when the current minister of agriculture asked me for that information. I have suffered greatly due to that loss of my position. I was shocked by the petty, political manner in which my non-governmental job was manipulated. I had been under medical care for the stress I suffered subsequent to my firing. I received cruel and anonymous phone calls for almost a month after being fired, which only stopped after I gave up answering the phone. End quote. And still the minister says he was not involved, is that correct?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Bagnall: Mr. Speaker, I've been elected for 10 years and never once in 10 years have I ever asked anybody how they voted when they came in my door.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 8 DECEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS

Well, then I suggest that if the minister believes that person is lying, he should take them to court because those are affidavits from the Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Speaker, now I'd like to go back to the Attorney General and here is another affidavit.

In or about March of 1997, I spoke with my local MLA, the current Attorney General, and was told that I could not expect assistance in maintaining my hours with the PEI LCC. After being told in April, 1997, that I would not receive my summer hours, I met with Pat Mella in her office and was told I should be happy that I was retaining the few hours I was receiving.

I'm wondering: Does the minister recall any of that?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

Ms. Dover: Mr. Speaker, what I do remember about this particular situation is knocking or calling at the door of this person's house and I was asked if I would guarantee her a job in the same position and whether or not and that she and her family would then vote for me. Mr. Speaker, I gave her the same response that I gave every person who asked me for something like that. I told them that I did not come with jobs in the trunk of my car and that if they wished to vote for me, then they did it because they were voting for me but that I would not guarantee and have not guaranteed anybody a position through a promise of vote in return.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

And the minister's argument might make some sense if, in fact, we didn't have access to court documents but it says here in or about March of 1997, well after the election. I'm wondering: Does the minister recall that conversation?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

Ms. Dover: Mr. Speaker, some people can make statements that even though they're under oath turn out later on to be untrue. The fact that those statements were made in my view, they don't ring true in my memory. If the hon. member wants to quote somebody who is saying that, then that's his prerogative but I don't recall that conversation. And in fact, I might point out that the person that he is referencing actually ended up getting more hours, in fact significantly more hours after our government got into power and continued to get significantly more hours until she went out on sick leave. But I certainly challenge them to check the hours that that person had before we got into government and then check the hours that she got afterwards and there'll be a significant surprise there for the hon. members.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much.

Quick question. Basically, the minister of agriculture and the Attorney General say that

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 8 DECEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS

the affidavits that are put forward are not true. I'm wondering: Does the Premier also believe that those people were lying?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, I wasn't privy to their presentations nor was I at the door or anywhere else when these suggestions were made so I have no comment.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

SERVICING OF SEASONAL ROADS

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

A Premier who won't even back up the minister of agriculture and the Attorney General because at least the Premier knows that these affidavits were part of a Supreme Court decision and that those ministers should finally start to stand up and be accountable but, unfortunately, they're not.

I now have a question for the minister of transportation. And I'm wondering with new developments taking place, I understand that your department has received a number of requests over the past few years to extend services to what I believe are classed as seasonal roads. I'm wondering: What is the policy in dealing with these requests?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works. The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Since there was quite a diatribe there directed at me before the question was asked, I want to indicate to the House that I firmly believe that what the

ministers have indicated is the truth and I accept that.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works.

Ms. Shea: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

PEI has well over 800 kilometres of what is classified as seasonal road. What's happening is that a lot of people are tending to move to their cottage and their cottage is becoming their year-round residence so in the wintertime, they do ask our department to have the road plowed or whatnot and we try to assist. If the road is a good quality road and our plows can go on the road if the road has enough strength in it, we will plow these roads on a non-priority basis.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Now a more specific question. I hope the minister of transportation is well aware. She probably knows our office has been talking with her department and I want to raise a concern brought to me by a resident of the Steel Road in the New Annan area and this is a road less than a kilometre long. As the hon. minister knows, a few years ago the hon. Member from North River-Rice Point was successful in convincing your department to carry out improvements to this road; however, due to lack of maintenance, it has fallen into despair. I'm wonder: Can she please update us on what the current status of that road is? Is it still a seasonal road or is it going to become a main road?

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 8 DECEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works.

Ms. Shea: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my understanding that the Steel Road is still a seasonal road and we have carried out some upgrades to it, probably more upgrades to the Steel Road than we normally would do to a seasonal road.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

LEVY ON ROOM ACCOMMODATIONS (FURTHER)

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I feel compelled today to stand up to question the Minister of Tourism again. The minister responsible for tourism operators, tourism establishments here on Prince Edward Island. Tuesday you ranted and raved about the accommodation levy and how it was great supported, strongly endorsed by industry. I would like to know how you can say that there is strong industry support when I have letters here from industry operators in your area from the Charlottetown area denouncing such a move. How can you say that there is strong industry support? Minister, Minister of Tourism. I don't want the Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs. I want the Minister of Tourism today to answer those questions. Minister of Tourism.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs.

Mr. MacFadyen: The Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove must know that the

legislation that's tabled is through the Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs responsible for municipalities. The legislation gives the authority in enabling legislation for municipalities to do what they so desire.

Some Hon. Members: Shame, shame!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

Ms. Bertram: Mr. Speaker, this is shameful. The Linkletter Inn and Convention Centre, Slemon Park, Quality Inn, Loyalist, Mulberry, Garden Gate, Princess Motel, Tourist Motel, Sherwood Inn, Bambridge Inn, and Heritage - these are all establishments against such a move. I am ashamed that the Minister of Tourism is not standing up to answer these questions. How shameful that he is pushing this off to municipalities. Answer the question, Mr. Minister of Tourism. How can you say it's strongly endorsed by the industry when here is a list - I will table it later on - letters from these people denouncing such a move? Now here they are whispering, Mr. Speaker. Answer the question Minister of Tourism and you're laughing. Stand up for tourism.

Speaker: Hon. member, you direct your questions to the Speaker please.

The hon. Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs.

Mr. MacFadyen: Mr. Speaker, we have not debated the legislation on the floor in regards to the *Municipality Act*. The mayor of the city of Charlottetown signed an agreement with the Tourism Charlottetown and hotel and conventions group and they in turn signed an

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 8 DECEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS

agreement. Then they came to government and asked government if government would agree to enable legislation for them to do what they wanted to do in the city. The people who run the city of Charlottetown are elected by the residents and they have the say in regards to what would be done within the municipality of the city of Charlottetown. We also included in the bill the authority for the Summerside area and the other municipalities if they so desire to use the legislation, we will enable them to do it as well and that's what the legislation is about.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

Ms. Bertram: Mr. Speaker, a Minister of Tourism question. They can go on about this being on the table on the floor to discuss but I have operators contacting me, e-mailing me in regards to this that are very, very angry over such a decision. I am asking the Minister of Tourism. Will you work with the Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs, take this off the order paper, this legislation, enabling legislation for the municipalities and will you take it off the order paper and consult with the industry before any further discussion in regards to this bill continues? The Minister of Tourism please.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs.

Mr. MacFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Tourism will not be on the floor debating the bill. The legislation that has been filed on the table will allow the municipalities the authority to administer and run the city the way that they want to and this is a request from both groups.

Ms. Bertram: Shameful, shameful!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

NEW PROVINCIAL DEBT

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, a question to the finance minister.

The minister tabled his capital budget yesterday which includes \$321 million in new debt to the Province of Prince Edward Island plus if you take the windmills - \$50 million and last year's capital projects, we're close to \$400 million. This is almost a 25% or 30% increase in net debt in the Province of Prince Edward Island. Is the minister not concerned about this debt load?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Well, first of all, the premise of the hon. member's question is wrong. The \$321 million is over the five-year period. Those are projections on what we're estimating to spend and the capital budget identifies the areas that money is going to be spent.

PEI ENERGY CORPORATION

With regards to the PEI Energy Corporation, yes, we have a loan. The province has loaned the PEI Energy Corporation money for the construction of the wind farm at East Point, money which based on the rate that they will get paid for the electricity that they generate, money that will be repaid to provincial treasury. In fact, we intend to make a little money off of the loan that we have lent the energy corporation, the same as any other

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 8 DECEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS

financial institution would. Not only that, it's no secret the minister of environment will have an announcement shortly on how Islanders can also directly benefit from the investment in East Point. I'll not go into the details but the minister will certainly make those details available to Islanders later in the day.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

NEW PROVINCIAL DEBT(FURTHER)

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

I want to go back to the minister. I'm really concerned about this debt load you're putting on to future Islanders here. We've seen how the former Tory governments have ruined the Government of Canada and how they burdened taxpayers across the country with massive amounts of debt. I'm just worried about the massive amount of debt that's going to be put on to our future generations. How is the minister going to intend to pay for this, out of current programs, because it's going to cost about \$25 million a year on interest in debt payments on this?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a good question. A number of things have happened which have given us greater ability in debt management. Certainly, over the last three years, we've refinanced a lot of the province's debt that was at 16%, 17%, 18%. Some we've refinanced at rates of 5%, 6% so the interest savings on that refinancing alone, I think, over the term or the life of that debt, we've accumulated interest savings of approximately

\$33 million.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Murphy: We also, Mr. Speaker, have just gone through a process, workforce renewal process, and people will remember where we've gone throughout government, identified areas of savings, areas where we could be more efficient in the delivery of public services. That exercise has identified \$25 million in annual savings which we're using to re-invest in things such as bridges, schools, hospitals, the infrastructure, the priority that Islanders have told us that they want us to invest in. In addition to that, we have received upgrades from the bond-rating agencies because of our discipline and positive performance in debt management. That, of course, allows to borrow money at better rates which in the long term is a savings to the people of the province.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, let's make no mistake about it. This is an election document done up in the Tory Caucus in order to get people elected. It has nothing to do with fiscal management and that's what I'm worried about, you know.

He talks about program renewal so are you saying after the next election, you're going to have another program renewal program and lay a bunch more people off in order to pay for this?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Well, again the premise of the

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 8 DECEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS

hon. member's question is incorrect. We did not lay a bunch of people off. We offered an early retirement package, made it available for those people who wished to participate. In fact, some people wanted to participate but they could not because the positions that they were in were deemed essential so they weren't allowed to participate in the package. What we have done here is that we have listened to what Islanders have told us.

For example, let's talk about the manors. Most of our manors were built in 1965, 1966, 1967. They're at the end of their physical lives. We know that our senior population is increasing so we need to start to begin a replacement program. That's why we went to a five-year capital budget so we could plan better, so we could be more efficient in delivering those replacement services that are needed. And the feedback that I've gotten on the budget that Islanders think investment in schools, hospitals, health care, highways, seniors, tourism are good uses of their taxpayers' dollars.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from St. Eleanors-Summerside.

VISITOR REBATE PROGRAM

Ms. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Tourism. There is a lot of concern in my area about the announcement of the federal government that the visitor rebate program is being cancelled. I understand the minister was in Ottawa recently and had discussions on this issue. Could the Minister of Tourism update the

House on how the meeting went.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

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

And I thank the hon. member for the question because it is an important question. Last weekend I, with the other ministers of tourism across the country, were meeting in Ottawa meeting with our federal counterpart, the hon. Maxime Bernier. And I'm very pleased to report that the issue got well discussed and Minister Bernier committed to bringing forward a proposal for consultation at the federal level in the next budgetary process for the inclusion of a new program that would allow conventions, tour operators, and group travel to apply for a visitor rebate program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from St. Eleanors-Summerside.

Ms. MacDonald: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

One of the main concerns for the workers at the GST Centre was job loss. Does this mean the jobs are safe?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Mr. P. Brown: Certainly, coming from the Prince County area, I share the hon. member's concerns for the jobs at the tax centre in Summerside. And right from the very beginning, the Premier sought assurances that there would be no job losses at the tax centre. Minister MacKay confirmed that. Minister

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 8 DECEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS

Skelton confirmed that and also Mr. Bernier with the announcement of this new program continues to confirm it.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

REPAIRS TO BASIN HEAD STRUCTURE

Mr. Mooney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The beach, the museum, other facilities at Basin Head are the anchor of tourism up in our neck of the woods up there for sure. It's not just for our area but I think for all of Prince Edward Island.

And my question today is for the Minister of Transportation and Public Works. And my question is could she update the House on how the repairs are coming at the Basin Head wharf structure please, Mr. Speaker?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works.

Ms. Shea: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The repairs at Basin Head have been carried out in two phases to not interrupt the tourism season so it's my understanding that the work should be complete around almost the end of December.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. Mooney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My final question. I've dropped out a few times just to see how progress is coming and

on behalf of the people in our community, I'd just like to thank the staff of the department of transportation. I'd like to thank the contractors. They've done a terrific job and I also thank the public for their cooperation and especially the staff at the museum that's made it very accommodating and tried to coordinate things so people wouldn't be disrupted too awful much. So my question is could the minister outline what the costs of this project were.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works.

Ms. Shea: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There had to be some reconstruction of both sides of the wharf and there had to be a new support structure for the cannery because the cannery itself actually moved about a foot and it's a huge building. And there also had to be some restoration done to the sand dunes so the entire cost is about \$2.3 million.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

SENIORS HOME REPAIR PROGRAM

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

Back to the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance just indicated to this House that, you know, he's going to invest a lot of money into manors across Prince Edward Island. No wonder he has to do it. They've been robbing seniors for the last 10 years. They've been not doing the repairs in the manors for the last 10 years. They let them fall apart. No wonder you have to put money into them now. But I

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 8 DECEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS

want one other little program added in to allow seniors to stay at home, our seniors to stay at home. Reinstate the Senior Home Repair Program so seniors can stay in their homes and have a good quality of life. Would you do that, Mr. Minister of Finance?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Well, once again, the premise of the hon. member's question is wrong, a number of inaccuracies in his statement. We had some quite some time ago increased the maintenance budget through the department of health for upkeep on the manor system across Prince Edward Island, a program that did not exist in any substantial way under the previous administration, which is unfortunate because despite being in office for 10 years, we're still spending a lot of money fixing Liberal neglect. We saw it at the school in Athena. We saw it at the hospital in Summerside but as I had indicated in an earlier response that the manors are at that stage of their lives where they need replacement. We know that the need will increase as our population ages so we think it's prudent to put that plan in place.

As to the direct answer to his question, the program for seniors' home repairs that will be an item that the Minister of Health, and the Minister of Social Services and Seniors I'm sure will consider and bring forward through the budget Cabinet process and we'll deal with that at that time.

Speaker: The hon. Member from

Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, you can tell it's an election year. Look at this. Everything is coming back on the table. In the last election - Oh, by the way, we have a doctor in the House. Maybe he can come down and help these members with their selective amnesia.

But you know, it was a Liberal program, this senior home repair program. It was a great program that this government came in and cut. It was a great program that we want back into the budget because it will allow seniors to stay in their homes instead of institutionalize them. They'd rather be home. I've talked to a lot of seniors who want to be home. So would you mind putting this in right away now that winter is here that maybe they can get some of the repairs done before the cold comes?

Leader of the Opposition: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Well, actually, again the premise of the hon. member's question is incorrect. The program did not exist when we came into office in 1996. In fact, we had put the program in place, reinstated it, I guess if you will. We've had a number of programs to assist in that area. There is a program through the Department of Energy, Environment and Forestry that seeks to assist in that area but again, as I said, the Minister of Health and Social Services and Seniors is the minister responsible in this area and I'm sure that he will have that on his list as we begin the operational budget discussions early in the new year.

Speaker: The hon. Member from

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 8 DECEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS

Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I got to laugh at this minister. The minister of environment giving out a couple of tubes of caulking and some plastic to put over your window. That just doesn't do it for some of our seniors in this province. They have repairs to do in their house to keep them up to snuff but this government maybe wants to put our seniors in institutions. This member doesn't want that. I want them to stay home as long as they can.

Another problem, Mr. Speaker, this government has neglected for the last 10 years - there hasn't been a stick of social housing built on Prince Edward Island since your government came into power, not a stick of government social housing built. There was a major waiting list for social housing in this province. When are you going to put some money back in to social housing on Prince Edward Island? You haven't done a stick of it in 10 years.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Well, again I'll give the hon. member marks for consistency because I don't think that's correct either. I think there have been some investments in social housing. There are currently - the government has been supportive of those. The Minister of Health would have those details but, for example, I know at the present time there are some agreements -

Speaker: All right, hon. members.

Mr. Murphy: There are some agreements and there are some funds in place for social housing that have been provided and I know

that the minister and the Department of Health and the Department of Social Services, and Seniors are developing plans on where to make those investments.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, here's a government that before the last election promised in their election documents to double the home repair program for seniors and then they come in to government and said: Oh, we're missing money. We don't know where the money went. Polar Foods bankrupted us. We got to cut the seniors' program.

Leader of the Opposition: Shame!

SUBSIDIZED HOUSING

Mr. R. Brown: Now I want the minister to bring back a list of social housing that was built through the PEI Housing Corporation. You stated in this house there was housing done through the PEI Housing Corporation. You mention each and every house in this House on Tuesday what was built.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, just the volume of the question doesn't make it any more accurate. We have made investments in social housing areas in the province. As I stated in my previous response, there are a number of agreements in place signed with the federal government. The Department of Health and Social Services are developing plans, I think in consultation with NGOs and other groups who are to be the beneficiaries of that

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 8 DECEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS

particular money. And I think that work is ongoing and I'm sure there'll be the appropriate announcements made when the decisions are made on how to invest that money.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I'm talking about housing for our needy people on Prince Edward Island, subsidized housing at the 25% rate. I'm talking about that housing. I've been getting a lot of calls from people in my neighbourhood and throughout Prince Edward Island that cannot find adequate housing, subsidized housing at 25%. I want the minister to bring back on Tuesday how many units have been built under the 25% subsidy program.

Leader of the Opposition: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: I think it is a good question. We should expand that to include the total investment that has been made on social housing.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, major repairs are needed in this social housing. Bill C-48 that has been put through the federal government that the previous Liberal government put forward and that the new Tory government has taken on with the help of the NDP has set aside a substantial amount of money for this housing. I want a commitment from this government that this

money is going to flow through the PEI Housing Corporation and allow the PEI Housing Corporation to administer this program.

Leader of the Opposition: Good question, another good question.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: I guess would the hon. member also include the money that's come for social housing for aboriginals? Does he want that through the PEI Housing Authority as well?

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: It's quite obvious this minister did not read the Bill C-48. There's trust accounts, four trust accounts. It's quite obvious this minister isn't doing his homework and I wish he'd get up to speed. I'm talking about the housing, social housing. There is the aboriginal housing. I'm not asking for that money. That will go through the aboriginal communities. I want the money. I want a commitment from this government that money will be going through PEI Housing Corporation, will be administered by the PEI Housing Corporation and the housing boards throughout PEI. Allow them to make the decision instead of politicians because they know the needs. These guys know where the votes are but they know the needs. Will you allow them to make the decisions for this social housing?

Leader of the Opposition: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 8 DECEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Murphy: I'm glad that the hon. member is finally starting to understand the issues around social housing and where the funding parts are. The agreements with Ottawa, yes, the dollars I believe were made available to the province in October of 2006. As I had indicated in an earlier response, officials in the department of health and social services are working with those in the social housing community, those who provide service on best how to invest the money. As to the mechanism on how that's going to work, I don't have that information. That would be up to the Minister of Health on how that money is going to flow. Suffice it to say, that money is transferred down. It is used expressly for that purpose and cannot be used for any other purposes.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

NATIONAL CHILD CARE BENEFIT

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, question to the Premier.

Sunday is Human Rights Day, worldwide Human Rights Day. Question to the Premier. Mr. Premier, you were clawing back the National Child Benefit from children on social assistance. I will table the policy document of his own social services department. I'm asking the Premier. Will you stop this discriminatory action on taking money away from the most needy children on Prince Edward Island? Your own documents say, and I quote: The national child supplement is not exempt.

Leader of the Opposition: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, a couple of days ago on the floor of the Legislature, we made amendments to the *Income Tax Act* where I stated at the time, I believe, we're only one of two provinces who have made a decision to provide a tax credit so that we make sure that 100% of the universal child care benefit is flowing through to people. We also made amendments to that act to make sure that that income is not considered when we're determining whether people are eligible for a low income tax credit and we've made those decisions. And the national child care benefit that flows through to the province is flowed through to those recipients who qualify.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to go back to the Premier because it's his policy. It's his discriminatory policy to the most needy children on Prince Edward Island. You're taking money from the National Child Supplement. You're clawing it back from these children. This is discrimination in my books, Mr. Speaker. Will the Premier commit today to give this money back to the most needy children on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is dead wrong again in his preamble. He recalls or should recall very well what happened. We had an agreement with the federal government. Under that agreement, no person on Prince Edward Island lost money. There was a re-investment in the working poor. The money went to the working poor

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 8 DECEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS

people who are out there working every day to try to get ahead having a hard time providing for day care, having a hard time to provide drugs for their families. So the money was transferred, the working poor, under an agreement with the federal government and so that money has benefited Islanders across this province. And the hon. member should loosen his tie up a little bit, relax, take the pressure off and try to understand what's really taking place.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: I'm insulted by this Premier.

Leader of the Opposition: Exactly. Shame on him!

Mr. R. Brown: Take the pressure off. Take the pressure off. Do you know the pressure that are on Island families right now trying to get through to Christmas, trying to get through the winter? Do you know the pressure on a single mother with two children trying to see through Christmas? Do you see the pressure on a single mother with two children trying to get enough food in their house? Do you see that we have to collect turkeys in order to give them a Christmas dinner, Mr. Speaker? Now I'm asking you again. Will you give this money back to the people who need it? And don't call the National Council of Welfare a pack of liars because they're not. These are the ones who are accusing you of clawing back that money. Remember when you get up the pressure of the family right now.

Leader of the Opposition: Exactly.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that we've had a terrific in assisting the working poor in the province, assisting people at lower incomes. You know, when we came to office, there was something like 58,000 people working. Today there's about 71,000 people working. That has provided more economic opportunity for Islanders. There's more happening in the province than ever. People are not just on 10 week - you know what they used to do. Talk about patronage. They kept them under the thumb. Here's a 10-week job. Vote for me and I'll keep you in office. That's the way they operated.

Speaker: Final question. The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, the Premier wants to go on that everybody's working on Prince Edward Island. According to the National Council on Welfare report that one of your new MLAs sat on for a number of years, 2500 children on Prince Edward Island are being clawed back this money, 2500 children according to the national welfare report are being taken money from. The pressure that is put on these Island families must be unbearable. I wouldn't want to be the mother of two children in this environment coming on to Christmastime, have to go to the food bank to get their Christmas dinner. I'm going to ask the Premier. It's Christmastime. We will support you 100% on this side of the floor if you need a special warrant for this one. Will you give that money back to the Island children, the 2500 that will have to suffer through Christmas?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 8 DECEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that we have flowed money through to these families with the exception of that first agreement where the money went to the working poor. No one lost and he also knows that in terms of how we rank against other provinces. We have one of the lowest rates of poverty across the country so our record speaks for itself.

Speaker: End of Question Period.