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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND**

**TRANSCRIPT OF  
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS  
AND THE  
ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
FOR**

**Friday 15 December 2006**



**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD 15 DECEMBER 2006 PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS**

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

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

**CBC ANNUAL TURKEY DRIVE**

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

Monday, November 27<sup>th</sup> was kickoff day for the annual CBC Turkey Drive which, of course, is one of the many charitable events operated throughout Prince Edward Island each Christmas season. The turkey drive has become somewhat of a Christmas tradition and it certainly highlights the well-known generosity of Islanders.

There is no set target for the number of turkeys donated, although it's worthy to note that last year saw approximately 2400 turkeys donated and food bank manager, Mike MacDonald, says the need continues to expand. The ultimate goal is to see that every family enjoys a good turkey dinner at Christmastime.

These turkeys and other non-perishable items are being collected by the Charlottetown CBC for the Upper Room Hospitality Ministry and the convenient drop-off locations are Island-wide: Superstores in Charlottetown, Summerside, and Montague; the CBC on University Avenue in Charlottetown, the Tignish Co-Op, the Salvation Army Thrift Store in Summerside, at the Summerside Police Station, the Downeast Mall in Montague, and the Keys IGA in Souris. The turkey campaign is going to wrap up on Monday with a lot of excitement in the lobby of the CBC Studios on University Avenue in

Charlottetown.

When it was my pleasure to host that morning show at CBC for many years and this was always a wonderful day of great excitement as hundreds of people pour into the lobby and share some Christmas cheer and, of course, with their donations of turkeys and other food stuffs to go into those hampers.

So I would encourage all Island businesses to get involved and once again make this annual turkey drive another great success. Charity is good for the soul and in this case, it's going to put a fine meal on the table for those less fortunate.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Alberton-Miminegash.

**PEI LUNG ASSOC. CHRISTMAS SEAL CAMPAIGN**

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

The Prince Edward Island Lung Association's Christmas Seal Campaign is in full swing. For most people, breathing is not something you even think about but for those who suffer from chronic respiratory disease, it is often the center point of their lives. When you can't breathe, nothing else matters.

For Islanders with respiratory disease, breathing is not something to be taken for granted. Emphysema and chronic bronchitis, known as COPD, are the leading causes of

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death and disability worldwide. It is the only disease among the top 10 causes of death that has continued to increase in both occurrence and death rates. Prince Edward Island is no exception as the problem on the Island is still growing. The number of women diagnosed with COPD has surpassed that of men. In the next 10 years, these numbers will double. All donations to the Christmas Seal Campaign remain on Prince Edward Island. They are used to help Islanders living with lung conditions like asthma, emphysema, and bronchitis.

Mr. Speaker, Breathworks is one of the lung association's public health programs. It is designed to assist individuals and families coping with emotional hurdles and physical challenges associated with COPD. Funds raised through the Christmas Seal Campaign are used to support such programs.

While Christmas is only a week or so away, the lung association is concerned as they have not yet reached their goal. I encourage all Islanders to support this worthwhile campaign.

On behalf of my wife, Linda, and our family and to my colleagues and to all Islanders in this season of hope, may the promise of peace and joy which began in a manger 2,000 years ago remain with you and yours all year long.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I want to talk about the role of the Opposition

in my member's statement. Our role over here is to keep the government accountable, review government policies, ask the tough questions to government that they don't want to ask but must be asked, bring concerns of the public to the Legislature, bring new policies to the Legislature like the cancellation of charging seniors for medical care while in the home, and confiscating their savings, the reduction of the amount seniors have to pay for rent while in senior housing, and the graduated licenses to help all Island youth. The Opposition is really the voice of the people who government chose not to listen to or who thinks they are too insignificant to listen to. Our job in the Opposition is made easy by all the work done by many people who have called our office with questions and concerns. I want to thank all those people who have called and prepared information for us. A good Opposition is only as good as the people who bring the questions to us and I must confess we are a great Opposition because of the great people of Prince Edward Island.

I want to thank all Islanders for their help and support of our Caucus and I want to wish them a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

The hon. Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs.

**LAND ACQUIRED BY VENTUS**

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

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Yesterday, the Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square told this House that Ventus Energy had 6,831 acres of land that they were allowed to go over the land limit for a corporation which is 3,000. In fact, Ventus has ownership of 9.07 acres and has acquired an interest in the land by way of lease or easement in the amount of 67.99 acres for a total of 77.06 acres.

**Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### NEW RESIDENT DOCTORS IN 2007(FURTHER)

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

My first question today is for the Minister of Health and as he knows on this side of the House for the last number of years, many Islanders have been pushing for a residency program in this province. I'm just wondering: Can Islanders expect to see that residency program begin in 2007?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

**Mr. Gillan:** Mr. Speaker, I, along with everybody else here in the House and Islanders, would like to be able to bring our medical students home just about all of them if they leave here if they would be so inclined to come home. We're not ready to announce that. We're still working on programs and even though the Opposition would snicker at that, it is serious. It's not easy for these

medical students for the varying reasons they want to pursue careers off Island but we've had very good follow-up this past fall in meeting with them. I think I have indicated that in previous questions here in the Assembly but we will not be ready at this time to announce a residency program.

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

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

I might be mistaken but I'm pretty sure I heard in the last budget and during another Throne speech that Prince Edward Island, that the Government of Prince Edward Island is going to be introducing a residency program. What is the holdup, Mr. Minister?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

**Mr. Gillan:** Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things, impediments I guess if you will, that have gotten into our way. We do - it's not just a matter of saying yes, we will take all Prince Edward Islanders and educate them back here and hopefully that they will stay. That is the case if you can get somebody that will be spending time in your home province to get familiar with the physicians and nurses and health care workers. They get used to the protocols and patients and everything and they are more apt to but we have to be able to go along with the arrangements and the rules and regulations of establishing a residency and it is not that easy. This past year there is going to be another program launched in Moncton. The Sherbrooke and Laval medical students are going to be educated now down in Moncton. That is good that they will be

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coming to the east coast into the Maritimes and some of them may be more inclined to stay. We will have PEI representatives in that class as well but there is a lot of the parameters, the legality that has to be followed and that is slowing us down.

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

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

And this is very concerning for myself and for many Islanders. Here is a government that has announced a residency program. It's my understanding our doctors have even been trained here to deliver the residency program in the Province of Prince Edward Island. It was supposed to be up and running awhile ago but for some reason, this government is not moving on this important issue to bring back our young doctors to this province. Even in Saint John now - I'm sure the minister is well aware - New Brunswick is working on another program for residencies in that area. When can we expect some movement on this important file?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

**Mr. Gillan:** Mr. Speaker, I mentioned that there are a number of reasons why we have not effected it right now. One of those - and I know that this is sort of a good news, bad news scenario - is that during the course of the year, particularly around the summer break, our medical students and others come over to Prince Edward Island to practice varied modules of their residency requirement or their training requirement as a medical student. The doctors that they serve under -

we call it preceptors; it's a preceptorship program - number about 25 to 28 here in the province. I think everybody would agree that we do have a limited market of doctors here on Prince Edward Island and not everyone is interested in being a teacher, being a preceptor so my theme is that most of those doctors on Prince Edward Island are now working with our students. We would have to be able to continue that program because it is very necessary for our students to be able to have a training opportunity to complete their medical training to get their doctorate but also we'd have to go then and be able to recruit other preceptors, other physicians who would be willing to work in a residency program. That is just but one of the areas and the hurdles that we have to overcome but we are working on it.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** That's quite unfortunate, that answer, because it said absolutely nothing that entire answer and here we are with a shortage of doctors in this province. Here with a residency program in Moncton, one in Fredericton, another one going to be set up in the Saint John area. Those young people are staying in those areas to practise medicine. Here in Prince Edward Island we've already trained our medical professionals in this province to deliver this program. We've already had a government that has promised this program and yet still no action on this important file. Mr. Minister, why would your government promise it in a budget if you're not willing to deliver?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

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**Mr. Gillan:** Just a contrary, Mr. Speaker, my responses now and previously have been that we are interested. We are going to be announcing some type of a residency program and, in fact, in this fall sitting of the Legislature in our budget Throne speech or not the budget, the Throne speech, we do make reference that what we were attempting to do is to be able to tailor a residency, community type program which is best suited to Prince Edward Island and to the medical students and to the public here. As I said, we are working along in that. We have made, run into some roadblocks but we have been able to work around them so we are one of the aspects - and I've mentioned this before as well - is that, yes, we'd like to be able to get our younger, recently graduated doctors home here in a residency program for two years but there are a couple of other planks that we are working on as well. It is a concept that we have not let fall off the table. We are interested in moving forward on it.

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

**PROVINCIAL GOLF COURSES FOR SALE**

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

Very disappointing, more broken promises from this government especially in the most important file in the province, our health care. It's quite unfortunate.

I've got a question now for the Minister of Tourism and I'm wondering: What steps have been taken to sell the provincial golf courses?

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

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

Since the announcement in the Throne speech, there's been a number of inquiries that came into the province of people expressing interest in it and we're continuing to evaluate those things. In the past, there's been an evaluation put on the courses so we're exploring this as it was demonstrated in the Speech from the Throne.

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

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

I'm wondering: Can you please indicate how many interested parties you've heard from since the Throne speech and if you could list those off? I'm wondering: Did Golf Links make a proposal?

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

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

Golf Links is the Crown corporation that operates the provincial courses.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you very much.

Could you please list off those that made a request to purchase golf courses.

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

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

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Speaker.

No, I will not be listing. These were inquiries made by corporations and interested individuals. Some were real estate agents who would be working on behalf of investors so it would be inappropriate at this time.

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

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

Another question for the minister. I'm wondering: How much money do you think you can raise through the sale of the golf courses?

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

**Mr. P. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, that's the purpose of going for (indistinct).

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you.

Do you have an evaluation?

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

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

There's been evaluations done over the years but the market always determines these matters and the level of interest from perspective buyers.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you very

much, Mr. Speaker.

And one of the things that worries me about this file is that a few years back this government had the Dundarave Golf Academy valued by, I believe, KPMG at the time for about \$1.7 - \$2.1 million. But with all the additional costs, taxpayers ended up paying \$3.55 million for something valued in the \$2 million dollar range. I'm wondering given that track record and the list of other bad deals, how can Islanders expect your government to effectively sell these golf courses?

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

**Mr. P. Brown:** Certainly, Mr. Speaker, this is another indication of the lack of belief that the Opposition has in the tourism industry in Prince Edward Island and in golf being a major proponent of that. Prince Edward Island has gained tremendous notoriety for its golf product. We've been named continuously the number one golf destination in Canada. This is very important and that's why we commit to it.

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

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

I don't know where that answer came from considering I was just asking a basic question on how we can trust this government and it's not a belief that I don't have confidence in the golf industry. It's a belief that I don't have confidence in your government. I'm wondering given the track record and the list of other bad deals, how can Islanders expect your government to effectively sell these golf

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courses?

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

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

And our government has worked very hard in developing this industry. We've gained a lot of value for this industry. We have created the \$80 million with the partnership of private industry have created an \$80 million dollar industry. And I'll assure the hon. Leader and Islanders that we will get good value if the appropriate conditions exist.

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

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

But it's really difficult to understand how you're going to do that considering your Premier and yourself paid \$3.55 million for the golf academy when it was only valued at \$2 million. You talk about your devotion to the golf industry yet any time I run into someone in the golf industry, all they do to me is complain about how your government put on a 10% tax for green fees and for memberships, which is hurting the golf industry so I don't understand where you're coming from. How can Islanders trust your government to act in their best interests?

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

**Mr. P. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, this government has acted in the best interests of Islanders for some period of time now. We've developed more economic opportunities for Islanders. We've increased the workforce from 59,000

to 71,000. We broadened health care. We broadened the education system in the province. We worked very hard on behalf of Islanders and we'll continue to do so.

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

**GOLF STUDY BY KPMG**

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

Obviously, the minister's media training is coming through which is probably even more of a waste of money. I've got another question now for the minister. Earlier this year, the minister told the House that he was hiring KPMG to do yet another study. Mr. Speaker, how much did that golf study cost?

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

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

I don't have that figure with me here today but I'd be willing to provide it.

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

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

I asked the minister in the House so you'd figure he'd remember it but according to the current estimate, that study was going to cost Islanders about \$26,000. I'm wondering: Was that study about the potential sale of the courses and if not, what was the subject?

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

**Mr. P. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, as any good

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corporate organization, we continue to evaluate our position both in the marketplace and the value of our assets. And KPMG, as most people would recognize, is a world renowned name in golf consulting and they've developed a reputation for that. So we've engaged their services from time to time to ensure that we stay on the leading edge of golf development in the province.

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

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

I'm not going to bring you into my response here but I'll bring in perhaps the hon. Member from Belfast-Pownal Bay. We didn't have an answer to the question there. The \$26,000 study, what was it for?

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

**Mr. P. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, as I just outlined, we do evaluation of our golf product. We do evaluation of our golf position in the Canadian and international market. We do cost comparisons. We do our value proposition whether or not our prices are right, whether the quality of our product is right, and what is the value of our assets and those things are a normal course of an organization that is staying ahead of the curve and determined to provide good services to our visitors.

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

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

I'm not sure if there was an answer there yet

either. Obviously, the minister is not willing to give any specifics on that. I'm wondering: Will the minister table that study in the House?

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

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

I don't really understand how I could be more specific than the value proposition, the value of the assets, the quality of the services, and the overall strength of the organization. Those are very critical points of a corporate entity and a service and that's what we do. We want to ensure our place. We've established this province as the number one golf travel destination in the country. That didn't come easy and it leads back to the Opposition's constant criticism of our investment in the tourism industry.

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

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

Maybe the minister is having hearing difficulties today; I really hope not. I asked him would he table that report in the House. It's a simple question.

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

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

Certainly, when we do reports within government, some are for the evaluation of our position and for the internal use of government to make better decisions. I will

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look into the report. I read the report but quite often reports have information within them that is, has third party identification and if the report has third party identification, then you have to be careful what you table. What we do is evaluate our position and we continue to do that and that's important but I will look into the report.

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

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

If the minister is able to table the report, I hope he checks into it this afternoon for me. There's a chance the House might not be open next week. I'm wondering if he can table it, would he be willing to forward it over to my office.

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

**Mr. P. Brown:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

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

**COST OF PROPERTY FOR MONTAGUE HIGH**

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

Since the Minister of Transportation and Public Works isn't here and since the Premier seems to have quite a bit of knowledge on this issue, I'll ask my next question to the Premier and I'm wondering. In your reconstruction of the Montague High School, you had to buy, I believe, three properties. I'm wondering: How much did you pay for those properties?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Mr. Speaker, I don't have those numbers at my fingertips but I will ask the minister to provide that information to the hon. member.

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

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

And just to get confirmation from the Premier, if the minister could forward that information to my office in case we're not in session, I'm wondering: Would that be acceptable to the Premier?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Yes, it would, Mr. Speaker.

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

**DISCUSSIONS RE GST REBATE**

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

My first question is to the Minister of Tourism. We have noted that the federal Minister of Finance, Ms. Skelton, and the Parliamentary Secretary, Diane Ablonczy, have both said in the media that and to the Member of Egmont that in fact there has been no discussions on the table in regards to the GST rebate. The minister had made statements in this Legislature last week in regards to this. I would like the minister to stand here today and if it's in fact true, would you please table any correspondence or any proof of that fact, Mr. Minister.

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

Attorney General.

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

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker, on buses that were made for 60, no. Sixty-nine wouldn't be an acceptable number.

And yes, I did make a statement in the Legislature in response to a question from The Member from St. Eleanors-Summerside in regards to the meeting that I had with Minister Bernier in Ottawa recently and I'll just read from the press release. Provincial and territorial ministers expressed a need for a GST exemption for tour operators and conventions. Minister Bernier agreed to convey this concern to his Cabinet colleagues and he said he would make that position in the budget Cabinet process that will precede the release of the federal government budget and I'll be prepared to table this at the Tabling of Documents.

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

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Mr. Speaker, I have letters which I will table later and they're from - I have a letter that a minister wrote to a mother who has two children. The children are riding on a school bus through the French school board that have 69, 68 children on the school bus some days. It varies, very concerned parent. And if the minister is stating that it's unacceptable if in fact that bus and the parent is very concerned, then why in fact has there not been anything done for this parent for these children on the school bus?

**Ms. Bertram:** That's fine. That's his media release but, in fact, there's nothing in stone yet and I think there was some misinformation given to the public because I think people in the industry, people believe that there were changes taking place. A compromise had been reached and, in fact, there has not.

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

**NUMBER OF CHILDREN ON SCHOOL BUSES**

**Ms. Dover:** Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously, as the hon. member would know, busing falls under the school boards but, certainly, from my perspective having too many students on a bus, 69 for a bus built for 60, that doesn't seem appropriate to me or to anyone else I wouldn't suppose.

But anyway, my next question is for the minister of education and I would like to first ask the minister responsible for education and busing of our children. Is it safe for there to be 69 children on a school bus, Madam Minister?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and

**Ms. Bertram:** Mr. Speaker, if it's inappropriate, then why isn't the minister doing anything. She's talking the letter to the parent saying that there's a consultation process right now. Well, what is the effect of this consultation? The parent had written

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letters back into November. What is being done? We are looking for safety for our children on school buses. Madam Minister, you are responsible for our children through the education system here on Prince Edward Island. My question is this: Will you not see that there is an extra bus added or see that these children who are being bused through the French school board in on, I believe, it's school bus no. 9 that they are bused in a school bus that has numbers that are safe, Madam Minister?

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

**Ms. Dover:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in the letter, if my memory serves me correctly, we suggested that the concerned parent contact the school board because that is where the responsibility rests and I would assume that she has done that. And I would assume that the school board would have taken note of her concerns and would be working on the issue. But the first avenue is through the school board to make sure that the school board is aware and that the school board tries to explain to the parent and address the concern that the hon. member is referring to.

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Well, yes, Mr. Speaker. The minister can pass it off as the board's responsibility. It could be the eastern board. It could be the western board but the reality is that there's expenses related to busing. And if the minister's department is not giving sufficient, adequate operational expenses directed towards busing, well then in fact, they can't add another bus to the route. So I

am asking you to sit down with this group of people and I will table the petition that the children signed in this school bus in regards to this. I am asking you as minister to sit down with these people and come up with a solution as of right now following the Christmas season that's safety on the school bus and maybe a new bus could be implemented, Madam Minister.

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

**Ms. Dover:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's preamble is certainly inaccurate. We do fund the school boards. We've been adding new buses to the system every year. We have a declining enrollment and so I think the bus situation and the funding to school boards has certainly increased over the last number of years. But as I said earlier, the hon. member should tell the parent who is concerned that they should address their concerns to the school board. Personally, my department will be in consultation with the school board but that is her avenue first and we will look at - I will look at the hon. member's letter when she posts it and we will certainly as a department talk to the school board affected.

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

**BLUE SKY AIRLINE AGREEMENT**

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

My question is to the hon. Minister of Tourism. In the news recently, there was word of a plan by the federal government to allow more international competition in the airline

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industry. I'm wondering: What possible impact could this leave for Islanders?

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

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

And we were very pleased when the hon. Lawrence Cannon announced a new program called Blue Sky, which is reflective of what the Premier said today, many blue skies over Prince Edward Island - blue skies over all of Canada, to open the airways to international and domestic carriers flying in international flights. At the present time, Canada lacks in international open skies agreements. We only have three with different carriers and countries whereas a country like United States has over 200 and this will allow international travelers to access our market much more easily.

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

**Ms. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Supplementary to follow up.

With the view of the minister, what is the potential impact of the Blue Sky or the open sky plan for our province's tourism industry?

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

**Mr. P. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased as minister to be able to welcome Prince Edward Island's first international flight last year with Northwest Airlines coming from Detroit coming to the province. I was also very pleased to join with the hon. Premier, the Minister of Community and

Cultural Affairs, and the hon. Peter MacKay last Friday afternoon at the airport in the announcement of a major development there which would increase the capacity for international flights to come into the province. And this Blue Sky agreement, which is an initiative of our new Canadian government to open access to international travel will be one more step further that will encourage international travelers to our province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**POLICY RE SCHOOL BUS CAPACITY**

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

Just to go back to the Minister of Education. When she stated that, you know, the 69 children on a school bus was probably not a good thing, I'm going to go back. I asked questions back in May of this past year during Estimates in regards to a policy that guidelines policy that the department could be implementing in regards to bus capacity. I'm asking you - and it was going to be looked at at this time through the minister of transportation but as minister responsible for education, will you be implementing guidelines or policy based on bus capacity here on Prince Edward Island, Madam Minister?

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

**Ms. Dover:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a committee that's looking at that right now because the age of the students who are

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transported on the bus does impact on the number of students who can safely and comfortably sit on our buses. Our students are our most valuable assets and we are concerned about transporting them safely. That's why we've spent an additional \$8.5 million over five years. This year in our capital bus replacement, we have \$1.525 million. We have been replacing our buses at a rate of 15 per year but now - well, it was 10. We've upped the number to 15 and we have committed that in five years' time we'll be up to 24 buses being replaced every year. So there is a commitment from this government to make sure that our students are safe and, as I said earlier, there is a committee that is studying that. They will be reporting to me, hopefully, in the not-too-distant future.

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

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

Well, Mr. Speaker, busing - if we're talking about declining enrollment, in fact, we should be seeing that the numbers of our children on the school buses should be less but yet we're seeing more children on the school bus today. So what's wrong with this message? I think it's because we're just taking out of the route system buses that there should be more buses from the department put into the school board. So Madam Minister, I'm asking you because I asked these questions back in May. You're saying that a committee is presently looking at this. Why is it taking so long? Let's get a policy on the table. Will you be tabling it in the next session of the Legislature, Madam Minister?

**Leader of the Opposition:** Good question.

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

**Ms. Dover:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said a moment ago, we have a committee that's looking at this. I will await their report. I know that we have added buses and we have declining enrollments but as I said earlier, we will await the report from the committee because they are looking at the numbers that can safely be transported if the students are elementary or intermediate versus the numbers who can be transported if their bodies are larger and the students are older. So keeping in mind that we both, the department and the school boards are very focused on making sure that our students are safe. As I said earlier, they're our most valuable asset and we certainly wouldn't want to do anything to jeopardize that so we are working. We are focusing on bus replacement because our buses had been so long on the road; 21 years of age in some cases, Mr. Speaker, so this government has done quite a lot in making sure that our buses are brought up to a more safe standard.

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Mr. Speaker, I think the reality is across the country there are jurisdictions that have policy in place. Children are of the same size probably across the country. We don't have to re-invent the wheel. Policy could be developed right now as it is, Madam Minister, and it's taking too long because we need to ensure safety for our children.

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**OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN SCHOOLS**

But I'll go on to another question. In regards to occupational therapy, do children in the Eastern School District do they options to have an occupational therapist if their educational plan calls for one?

**Mr. R. Brown:** That's a good question.

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

**Ms. Dover:** Mr. Speaker, we have been implementing the recommendations of the task force. We have money set aside to do that. We have not discussed occupational therapists yet but this government has committed \$9 million to implement the recommendations of the task force; \$1 million this year, \$3 million next year and \$5 million the next year. So if the recommendation is in there, we'll certainly consider it but, no, at the present time we don't have occupational therapists as part of our regular staffing component.

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Well, it's interesting to note that the \$560,000 that there was supposed to be a plan for, this should have been a key necessity that this person could have been hired this year to be able to service children that need occupational therapy. Where is the priority? Assessment and testing is obviously the priority of this government. So I'm asking: Why is it that children in the western board have access to an occupational therapist but yet the children in the eastern district have no

access? I have letters here from schools that I will table later that children who need that assistance cannot have it because the district doesn't have that capability; so Madam Minister, why?

**Leader of the Opposition:** That's a great question.

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

**Ms. Dover:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the obvious role of the Opposition which is what the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square talked about, is being fulfilled this morning by the hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove. She's trying to suggest that everything gets done in one day but I would remind her that Rome wasn't built in a day. We are certainly focusing on the educational needs of our students.

**Leader of the Opposition:** You're on your -

**Speaker:** All right, hon. member.

**Ms. Dover:** We have quite a number of issues that we are dealing with. We have added money to the educational budget each year and I think although the hon. member might have to scratch her head a little bit to find spaces that she can criticize. For the most part money that this government has spent on education is certainly the envy of a lot of other provinces across this country.

**Some Hon. Members:** Shame, shame!

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

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**Ms. Bertram:** Mr. Speaker, I don't need to scratch my head at all. There are lots of things that are necessary. This is an election ploy, this document that was tabled, the progress plan - there's no major plan on the table for that \$560,000 from this government, no plan at all and I've asked for it. She talks about Rome being built and not built in one day but you know what? Each day for a child is important and we need to build day by day and we need to see these support services so I'm going to go to the Minister of Health. Will you, Mr. Minister of Health, provide assistance and work with the Department of Education and provide assistance so, in fact, the Eastern School District children can have access to an occupational therapist, Mr. Minister?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

**Mr. Gillan:** Mr. Speaker, we have been questioned on this in the past and we are working on programs within our respective departments, both the minister of education and myself. We do realize that the demand certainly does outstrip the individuals that we have. I do have an updated note that currently the complement of occupational therapists in Kings County is 1.6 full-time equivalent. In Prince County, we have 4.3; in Queens County where the population is the greatest we do have the equivalent of three. We have both adults in home care and at the PE Home, which is 1.8 and 1.2 respectively but those numbers indicate that there is a need out there. We're attempting to meet that need as the minister of education has indicated and we will continue to do our best.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Crapaud-

Hazel Grove.

**Ms. Bertram:** Okay, Mr. Speaker, those are numbers but of those numbers, who are servicing children in our school system, Mr. Minister?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

**Mr. Gillan:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, we have attempted to do our best. And even though she has indicated, the Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove says that we need more, yes, we're not disputing that. And both the minister of education and myself indicate that there is a growing need out there, particularly in the area of the occupational, the mental health patients as well. Home therapy tasks are increasing all the time. That's an area that we in health want to look at as well so the demand is there and we are attempting to meet it.

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

**E-MAIL RE BREAKFAST PROGRAM AND NUTRITION**

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

Children of PEI should be of our greatest importance and the money should be found. Anyway, I'll go to another issue relative to the minister of education. I would like to see if she is in support. I have an e-mail which I will table later from her department that is looking for - a \$20 contribution will feed an Island student breakfast for a month. It's an e-mail that was sent out to provide money for the breakfast program and it's talking about how

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research shows the link between nutrition and learning and here is your department calling on the public support for the breakfast program yet your department is providing nothing for a breakfast program on Prince Edward Island, Madam Minister? What do you see wrong in this message?

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

**Ms. Dover:** I think if my memory serves me correctly that the hon. member has selective quotation powers when she stands up to quote or refer to a memo. If she reads it correctly, this was an initiative of group students in a school. They wanted to do a special project and they wondered if we would support them in their project and, certainly, in order to provide leadership among our students in order to support them as they come up with their causes that they wish to support, the Department of Education is always supportive of initiatives that our students bring forward that will train them in relation to planning and leadership.

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Mr. Speaker, this e-mail was sent out from the department from the deputy minister and there's no discussion about the school's initiative in this e-mail. And the point being if it is in fact true that it is schools that are doing it, the point being, Madam Minister, what do you see wrong here? Why doesn't your department support them and give them money towards supporting the breakfast program here on Prince Edward Island?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and

Attorney General.

**Ms. Dover:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as a parent, I know that you can't give your students everything that they might look for. You have to allow them to do some things on their own and if my memory serves me correctly, this was a project as I said a moment ago that was arrived at by a number of students. They wanted to do this and the department was very supportive in training and leadership qualities with these students so I really don't see what's wrong with students coming up with the project and the department showing its support for the students.

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Again, another disappointing statement by the minister. Again, there's \$560,000 that was put for student achievement. How do we define student achievement? I think Breakfast for Learning is a very important component to achievement, a good start in the day but anyway, my next question is for the minister of education.

### INTERNET CHILDREN'S SAFETY PROGRAM

The Government of Alberta has now initiated a program through Microsoft Works and it's called, 'The Bad Guy Patrol' and it's for children aged five to ten and it's web safety. And it's a great program on the Internet for children of those ages and I'm wondering: Since we have been talking about this, will you look to the Government of Alberta? Will you talk to their officials in education and to early learning and see that we can implement

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this program here on Prince Edward Island?

**Leader of the Opposition:** That's a good question, good question.

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

**Ms. Dover:** Well, Mr. Speaker, before I get into that part of her question, I would like to comment on the fact that across the province, we have quite a number of community groups who provide for the breakfast needs for some of our students. Again I don't see that there's anything wrong with that. We have parents who are very supportive. We have parents who go to the schools and volunteer and government can't be everything to everybody and with the community support, we're able to accomplish a lot more. We have partners in education. We're not the only ones who are interested in education; the department is, the school boards are, the PEITF - they're partners in the education system but most important are the parents. And I know that the parents across this province have been very committed to different causes and this is one cause that the parents have decided that they will support, volunteer, and contribute to. And I think that that's a worthy part by one of our partners in the education system.

Now in reference to Alberta, does the hon. member honestly believe that everything that Alberta is able to afford to do, we here on PEI are able to afford to do? I mean looking at the world and looking at Canada I think with rose coloured glasses on if you think that PEI can in any way match the revenues of Alberta and be able to do what Alberta does.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Crapaud-

Hazel Grove.

**Ms. Bertram:** Come on, Mr. Speaker. It's a program that's already been developed and all they have to do is probably get the rights off of it. It doesn't have to be re-invented and it's on the Internet now through the Government of Alberta. We could get the rights here and have it for our kindergarten programs here on the Island or for the elementary grade level here. So I don't think the minister, this worldly - sure, we can do this easily, Madam Minister. You just have to show the initiative.

**WORKERS' COMPENSATION LEGAL FEES**

Anyway, for the Premier, I'd like to go to an issue in regards to Mr. Bruce Martin and you wrote a letter to him dated November 17<sup>th</sup> in regards to his reclaim of legal fees. And you stated that because of the Workers Compensation policy that it's not being given to him. For the Premier because this is your letter, I would like to ask you: Why have you not approached the Workers Compensation Board and look for policy changes because they make policy changes all the time? So why haven't you done this, Mr. Premier?

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

**Ms. Dover:** I would like to comment on the hon. member's statements in relation to showing leadership. This government has shown leadership all over the years in relation to education and the Department of Education with the various ministers that have been there cannot take a back seat, will not take a back seat. They have been foreleaders, forerunners in relation to innovative projects here in PEI.

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As ministers of education, each year we meet as Council of Ministers of Education for Canada and we do share ideas and we do contribute ideas from one province to the other. We challenge one another but the revenue is a significant component and we can only expect that PEI will be behind Alberta when it comes to being able to pay for innovative things and do innovative projects.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Binns:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Glad to see the hon. member is not attacking my constituency again today. But in regard to the Workers Compensation Board policies, she knows quite well that the Workers Compensation Board operates with money paid in by employers and then the board is made up of both employer and employee reps. They do set the policies of the board and it's been their longstanding policy not to pay legal fees for people who have a grievance against a board decision. And from time to time, those decisions are reviewed and government has done that in the last number of years but the feeling was that that policy should not be changed. It has not been recommended for change despite many requests from people who have had differences with the board. You know, the minister continually asked the board to consider approaches but it's their view at the present time that their policy is the best one for the province.

**Speaker:** Final question. The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

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

Well, it's disappointing because Mr. Bruce

Martin had his case before the Supreme Court and he was in fact found to be, to deserve the reclaim that he had through Workers Compensation Board. But anyway, they could be showing leadership again.

### MIDWIFERY

My final question is to the Minister of Health and it is in regard to midwifery here in Prince Edward Island. Nova Scotia has just passed legislation this past fall and I'm wondering - I have some letters here that I will table later. How are we in terms of looking at midwifery here on Prince Edward Island and passing legislation to support that birthing option, Mr. Minister?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors. The hon. Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs.

**Mr. MacFadyen:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I want to respond to the Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove's previous question.

**Speaker:** Hon. member, no, won't allow that.

The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

**Mr. Gillan:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very aware that the Association of Midwifery have been on a writing letter campaign. I have received their letters. We have had meetings with them, a meeting with the association and many meetings within our department. I guess it is a case of we think that the population on Prince Edward Island, which numbers about 1300 births per year and then, of course, our population grows by births outside coming back into our home province here is quite well

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satisfied and served by the present number of pediatricians. However, we were always open but at this particular time, we do not have any plans to be able to offer that service here on Prince Edward Island.

**Speaker:** End of Question Period.