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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

TUESDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2009

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Main areas for tourism marketing

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My first question today will be to the Minister of Tourism. Madam Minister, what are your main areas for your marketing for the tourism department across the country?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, I'm hesitating because I'm not sure when he says "main areas" if he's referring to what we've done over the last year.

Obviously, golf was our predominant feature for Prince Edward Island. However, we look at the markets that we're hoping to attract most people from, which would be the region, so we're talking about Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, but Quebec and Ontario are, of course, very important to us. I have to say that our inquiries this year from Quebec have phenomenally gone up with the advertisements that we've done over the last year and we look forward to increasing that in 2010.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the same minister. Madam Minister, are you still using the Gentle Island as your marketing strategy?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Yes, Madam Speaker, we are.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Is it working?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Yes, Madam Speaker, it is.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Marketing strategy re: Olympics

Mr. Bagnall: Oh, it is working. Thank you, that's good. Madam Speaker, to the same minister.

You announced earlier, or your government announced, that you were going to be putting \$500,000 into the Olympics in BC. Can you tell us what marketing strategy you put into that?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Yes, our department, in conjunction with community and cultural affairs, together we are a participating province with the Olympics.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Can you tell the House what that \$500,000 that you're investing into the Olympics, what's that going to be used for?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, the cost of participating (Indistinct) contributing province to the Canadian Olympics is substantial, so as opposed to just going in as a province we are coordinating with New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

We are creating what's called Atlantic Canada House. That will be on Granville Island, if you're familiar with Vancouver, and it's going to be an opportunity for us to host and showcase Atlantic Canada to not only Canadians who will be there, but those from around the world. Without that partnership - and partnerships are the way to go in this economic situation - we wouldn't even be able to participate in the Olympics.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I guess that's different from your throne speech, because your throne speech said you were going to be using that for Canadian athletes. So where do Canadian athletes come into this \$500,000?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, my department is tourism.

Our purpose is to promote the province as a destination. As far as giving this money to athletes directly, no, but the athletes in general are going to benefit because we're, of course, going to bring people to the Olympics to allow them to be seen, and the hope is that they're going to do extremely well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Travel to Olympics

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you.

Madam Speaker, does this \$500,000 include all travel that the department will be making, and members will be making, going to the Olympics?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I just want to - we're working together with the Department of Tourism. Prince Edward Island was very pleased to sign on to VANOC as a contributing partner, no different from other jurisdictions across Canada. Certainly at this point the province has not purchased any tickets to attend, but as the Minister of Tourism has mentioned,

we are part of Atlantic Canada House. We are glad to partner with that. This is a great Canadian event, a great international event, and we are so pleased to be able to support our province through the Department of Tourism.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Now I'm just wondering if the Minister of Tourism can answer the question that I had asked, that's all.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Sure. I have nothing different to add to it. I think that the fact of the matter is that we are participating in the showcase, the money is going into being able to put this showcase on, and I have nothing else that I can add to the minister's previous comments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you. She didn't answer the question. I asked if the expenses were included in that \$500,000.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, if the hon. member would like to specifically state what

expenses he's looking for, I will certainly respond.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: I noticed that your deputy minister has been in Vancouver more than she's been on the Island lately. I'm wondering, who's covering her travel costs right at the present time? Is that included in the \$500,000? Or is that over and above?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: The deputy minister, Madam Speaker, I would have to say without her involvement Prince Edward Island would never even be a part of this, neither possibly would Atlantic Canada, or specifically, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

She has done a great amount of work in all of this as part of her role as deputy minister, and it's something that we should be proud of, not something that should be criticized.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: How many trips has your deputy minister made to Vancouver already, Madam Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, my deputy minister's travel is not something that I go through with a fine tooth comb, I guess one

could say.

I'm quite well aware when she travels, but I don't have in front of me her specific travel dates, times, and what she did when she was there. But if it's so important to the hon. member I'm sure it's something that we can bring back at a later date.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I look forward to that information coming back. Who else from your department has travelled to Vancouver, along with the deputy minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Again, hon. member, if you think I can keep track of travel I guess you must not think that I do anything else in the department.

Anyway, speaking about that, we obviously would have our director of marketing attending some of those meetings, and again, does a very good job when she's there.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, to the same minister.

What's the purpose for the deputy minister going there back and forth? Can you give us a reason why she can't be doing that on conference? Everybody does conferencing

now. Why does she have to travel to BC for a meeting? Why can she not do it by computer conferencing?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, the deputy minister, when she does need to travel for meetings with VANOC, they are not solely with VANOC.

Typically CTC, as I'm sure the hon. member is aware, is based in Vancouver, and many times meetings are arranged at the same time. So it's not solely just for VANOC when she travels. Quite often the deputy ministers with CTC are meeting at the same time.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Marketing strategy re: Olympics (further)

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Your planned marketing strategy for BC, what research have you done into that to decide to put \$500,000 into the Olympics. What marketing strategy? What are the figures from your research that's going to help the tourism industry here on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you.

I want to make it very clear, Madam Speaker, that when the Province of Prince Edward Island signed on and put out the \$500,000, that \$500,000 is as a contributing partner to Vancouver Olympics, and each province across our country, and territory, looked at our population base, and that was deemed to be what Prince Edward Island's total was to be.

So the VANOC committee came up with the \$500,000 figure. We had no choice. That was the total given. Some of that money goes directly to Confederation Centre because there is arts festivity around this. Obviously it's a whole celebration of culture in Canada.

So I don't know what the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir is trying to frame here, but this was an obligation that Prince Edward Island had if we were to become a partner in the Vancouver Olympics, and hon. member, I think it is going to be a wonderful event for our country and to showcase our wonderful province.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: That's all great and good coming from a minister that spends \$200,000 doing her office over and not looking after the interests of her constituents. She can get up and talk like that all she wants.

I asked the minister - that question was

directed to the Minister of Tourism, not to the Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Speaker: Are you re-asking the question?

Mr. Bagnall: Yes. I just would like for her to answer the question that was asked.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) figure that out.

Ms. Bertram: Again, Madam Speaker -

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: I'm standing to answer the question in reply because it's coming from our department, the 500,000 allocation to the Vancouver Olympics Committee. Furthermore, Madam Speaker, our government is committing a lot of dollars to sport in this province.

We had a wonderful event this summer. We hosted the 2009 Canada Games with terrific success in our province and in our country.

Some Hon. Members; Hear, hear!

Ms. Bertram: We are supporting our athletes through the best ever program which is leading to our best performances ever. We have a wonderful Island athlete performing and going to do wonders at the Olympics this year, Heather Moyse. So we are very happy to see her compete. We are very proud of athletes on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

That's great, and I agree with you. We're lucky to have an Island athlete. But don't you think your sports dollars would be better put into training and working with athletes rather than to run to BC so you can have a big party out there? Don't you think it would be better if you turned around and used the money here for our own athletes so maybe the next time we'll have more than one athlete there and have a number of them?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Our government hasn't committed to going and travelling or whatever the hon. member is talking about. But as a contributing partner, this coming weekend we have the torch relay coming across Prince Edward Island. That was all part of being a member of the Vancouver committee and being a part of VANOC.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bertram: Our Island communities from east to west are being part of this, communities are excited, and this is a national-international activity that we are part of, and our athletes are very pleased.

It's interesting to note that those that are carrying the torch this Saturday and Sunday for PEI are all athletes, whether they are at the Canada Games level, whether they are former elite athletes in our province, they are being recognized by carrying the torch across our great province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Travel to Olympics (further)

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

That was a great speech, thank you. I'll go back to the Minister of Tourism again. In the throne speech we talked about leadership. Madam Minister - this is to the Minister of Tourism: Are you planning to attend the Vancouver Olympics?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, at this point in time it hasn't been determined exactly who's going to be going, so I can't answer one way or the other yet.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: So she is going. How many of your staff are going to be attending with you, Madam Minister? How many of your staff will be attending with you?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, once again, I, like the minister, stated - the participation at the Olympics as our province is something that if we didn't go there, we would be the only province and territory not there. So the contribution that came from the minister's Department of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour is so important to show that Prince Edward Island is every bit as capable in participating in any national event as any other province or territory.

As far as whether or not we have staff going, if we weren't there, if my staff weren't there, if somebody else's staff weren't there - and none of that has been decided yet as to who is going - what would we be showing the rest of Canada? That we can't compete? That's not acceptable.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: This is about tourism dollars. We've had a tourism season that hasn't been great. Our tourism has been on a decline since this government came in. It's about wise spending. I mean, I know the minister went to Ottawa the other year and spent 200,000 for wine and cheese parties. That's the problem we got, there is no accountability in the department.

How many other staff members will you be taking to BC with you? How many staff members will be attending?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, the hon. member mentions about accountability.

What would be really nice is if when he talks about accountability that he actually states facts and not just fiction. This whole thing - and what he likes to reference to in the past - is not fact at all. I've explained in the past about the Ottawa reception, I'm trying to explain about VANOC. I can't speak any slower than I'm doing now. I appreciate it if he would take time to listen to myself and my colleague, and hopefully he will realize: None of us have been identified to go, none of the staff have been identified to go. When that is done we will certainly make he, and everyone else, quite well aware.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Your staff that's been there all summer, Madam Minister, who's covering the cost for them? Is that out of the 500,000 that - you've had marketing staff, you've had your deputy minister there. I even know Brooke MacMillan was there, but was he there as part of your staff? Is he going to supply the booze for your party? Can you answer that for us?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, if I may, I would suggest that the hon. member submit to me all these dates that he thinks my staff

were there and I'll concur or do otherwise.

I'm not aware of the fact that my staff spent the summer in Vancouver.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you.

Madam Minister, will you be taking some of your other government members to BC with you for the big party?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I'm planning on attending as Premier Campbell, I understand, is going to be in Prince Edward Island this Saturday. He's invited all the premiers to the opening and closing. Unfortunately I find it difficult to be away for that period of time, with the running of province and having a young family as well.

With regards as to who else is attending, we're not sure yet, who knows? There could be a Cabinet shuffle before now and then. We have security measures that have to be put in place. But here's what I do know, that Prince Edward Island is a contributing partner to the Vancouver Olympics. We get the torch relay coming through Prince Edward Island here, we get to support our Island athletes, and we get to support the great nation that we live in, which is Canada, which has the opportunity to host a world-class event.

We're also partnering with the four Atlantic Provinces to put on Atlantic Canada House on Granville Island. This will be an opportunity for us to showcase our great agricultural products, our seafood products, and our culture. Part of that money is going towards the Young Company at the Confederation Centre who is going to go out and get to put on shows. Even on the days when there is going to be a PEI day, when the medal ceremony takes place the Young Company is going to get to showcase its talent to the world. These are funds that are invaluable when it comes to supporting Prince Edward Island culture, Prince Edward Island athletes, and putting Prince Edward Island on the national scene.

Just so the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir knows, when it comes to the Atlantic Canada House that we're participating in, ACOA is also a major contributor to that as well. So perhaps he should have a talk with Pat Dorsey and Gail Shea on that, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Minister, I find it hard to believe that you're taking taxpayer dollars. First of all, you put in the throne speech that it was going to go to Canadian athletes, and now we find out today that that's not what it's about, it's about you having a party and entertaining your friends in Ottawa.

Can you tell me, Madam Speaker -

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Bagnall: In BC. There are many parties it's hard to keep them straight. Can you tell me, Madam Minister, who will be the entertainment that you're taking from Prince Edward Island to BC?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Since the hon. member is alluding to the financial, the contributing partner amount, I will respond. As the hon. Premier has stated, this is a wonderful event for our culture, our artists, on Prince Edward Island. Very significant for Prince Edward Island to have coordinated this Atlantic Canada House. I have, which I will table - this is the Atlantic Canada House management committee meeting memo and it's by teleconference. So the hon. member was talking about teleconference. I will table this during Tabling of Documents.

It's interesting to note that in attendance on a teleconference was the hon. minister's deputy and regrets were from Mr. Dorsey and others. But this was a teleconference and I will table that.

But furthermore, we have the likes of Meaghan Blanchard who is going to be on the stage out there at Atlantic Canada House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bertram: That is top-notch performances from Prince Edward Island. We have the Young Company that the hon. tourism minister has spoken about. We have top-notch artists on Prince Edward Island going out. Just like the Canada Games, the Canada Games had the national artists program. We had lots of entertainment through that. No different than the Olympics.

So, hon. member, this is part of being Canadian and we are part of VANOC.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This is coming from a minister who had a chance to bring in the Island Games to Prince Edward Island and bring in \$10 million to the economy and she scraps it. But yet when we want to go to BC she wants to take 500,000 and take it to BC, but she won't do that. We wanted our athletes -

Speaker: Hon. member, is there a question in there?

Mr. Bagnall: I'll be getting to it, Madam Speaker.

This big party that's going to be taking place out there, are you going to be dealing with Prince Edward Island shine and Prince Edward Island wines out there? Are you

going to be serving them at this big gala party you're having?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This is a premier elite sporting event, artist event, for our country and for the world. Again, we don't even know if we're going to be attending. The Premier, perhaps, will be attending. Who knows who will be attending? But our province has not purchased any tickets. We gave up that opportunity. That was part of being a contributing partner. We gave up that opportunity, hon. member, and you probably heard media had a report probably two or three months ago that asked the question to us.

Furthermore, again, our province supports our athletes. We are happy that Prince Edward Island is a contributing partner to the Vancouver Olympics.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: To the Minister of Tourism again. Is there an invitee list that you're going to be invited to attend these games from your department? Are you making up an invitee list to take with you?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, maybe the

hon. member would like his name added to it and then maybe the questioning might stop.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Obviously she's a little upset with the line of questioning, but it's you that's wasting and squandering taxpayers dollars.

Why don't you answer the question? Have you got an invitee list that you're going to be taking to the Olympics with you?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, as we've tried to explain, I don't know if I'm going.

I have no idea who yet will be going from the province. Obviously, there will be support staff there, but the squandering that he talks about and this big party and who's going to get to be invited? Madam Speaker, the world will be invited.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

C&D site in Hazelbrook

Mr. McIsaac: Madam Speaker, a question for the Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry.

A little over a year and a half ago the C&D site in Hazelbrook was shut down by a

ministerial order. There is some action out there at the present time and I was wondering if you could explain what exactly is going on there. The community is quite interested in hearing what the plans are for that site.

Mr. Bagnall: The community is upset.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry.

Mr. Brown: Madam Speaker, yes, hon. member there was a ministerial order issued on the Hazelbrook site.

We've since then worked with the company that operates the Hazelbrook site. They have met all the conditions that the ministerial order and that ministerial order has been lifted. There has been a request for a new permit for this site. That permit has been issued today to the operator of that site, and I must say that it's a one-year permit - a one-year permit only.

We've been in discussions with the community and it's a permit to open up, to level off the property, to cap the property, and close it, Madam Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

What assurances can you give us long-term? I mean, they're quite concerned about the air and the water quality out there. So long-term, in the plan for shutting that down, what assurances are there on those items?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry.

Mr. Brown: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The current legislation that's in place does not include closure plans for these sites. It's been an oversight in the legislation and we're developing that right now. But with this particular operator we have laid out a number of terms and conditions that this developer or this operator must meet in order to get the permit. He has agreed to meet those conditions for an orderly shut down.

Right now, someone who operates a C&D site could technically, legally, walk away from that site and leave it up to the people of Prince Edward Island to clean up. That's a piece of legislation that we're putting together to make sure that that doesn't happen in future.

But this developer has come along, in consultation with the community, and I must thank the community there for their efforts here. They did due diligence here and kept a close eye on this facility. Working with them we have a plan in place in order to open up the site to allow the developer to put some more product into the site, to cap it off, basically to go with the profile of the land, and then close.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Highway 2 and O’Leary Road

Speaker: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question is for the hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works. Yet another fatality has occurred at the intersection of Highway 2 and O’Leary Road in West Prince. It’s a fact that most traffic accidents to involve human error. The installation of a roundabout or traffic light at this intersection would certainly lessen the chance of human error.

Will the minister commit to installing a roundabout or traffic lights at the intersection of Highway 2 and O’Leary Road?

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

Mr. MacKinley: Thank you very much.

Basically what’s taking place there, that intersection meets all Canada’s standards, US standards. We had Jim Robinson, I guess it was, highway engineer consultant come in and look at it. It’s a still a mystery, sort of, to us why there are so many accidents there. They did move a tree line, they did move a house, they put in bumper strips, they also put in more flashing lights. If we would be looking at anything, it may be a roundabout. See how we make out down here first, if we don’t get lynched with these roundabouts.

But it may be that.

The problem with the traffic lights is if you’ve got traffic lights and somebody goes through that light at the speed on the Trans-Canada - now the speed was 90. We lowered the speed limit down there to 80 going through that particular intersection. Our department is going to make recommendations to myself and my deputy very shortly - I say sometime between - probably before the House is over - what should be done there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I might suggest that he will be lynched if he doesn’t do something to that intersection, but - thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Cost of artists re: Olympics

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Tourism. February the 18th has been dubbed as Islander Day at the Olympics. We’re going to be showcasing our Island artists and talent from Prince Edward Island. Is the cost of hiring the artists, the cost of transporting the artists out and back - is that included in the \$500,000? That’s to the Minister of Tourism. If she knows her facts she’d

answer.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I reply, the Minister of Tourism can reply, but the financial spend of \$500,000 comes from Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour so that is why I'm rising to answer.

Hon. member, money was directed to Confederation Centre of the Arts, and yes, that will be supporting the artisans that are going.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Marketing strategy re: Olympics (further)

Mr. Bagnall: I guess my next question would be to the Minister of Tourism.

We are spending \$500,000 to market Prince Edward Island in BC. Is that a project of the PEI Tourist Association, or is that from your own department?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: Madam Speaker, I think this is four or five times.

The \$500,000 is coming from Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour. That money is

as a contributing partner to the Vancouver Olympics. There's been numerous things on the media in the last week. I know CBC had kids in schools with the red mitten campaign, the torch relay. None of that would be possible without being a partner, and we signed on as a partner, hon. member, and the \$500,000 is going as a contributing partner. So I don't know what you're trying to frame, but certainly this was being part of the VANOC and we're part of it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

What we're trying to frame is this government's wasting taxpayers dollars here.

An Hon. Member: On the Olympic games?

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, we're in a time of recession here.

We're in a time of hard times. People can't (Indistinct) their oil bills. We can't - and now we can't even - we're putting \$500,000 into a party out in BC so a few selected people can go and attend this event, and with \$500,000 of taxpayers money into it. My question is: How can the minister justify this in tough times, wasting that money to take to BC out there?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: It's really unfortunate that the hon. member sees this in this light, because if you take a look at the economic spin-offs with the 2009 Canada Games had to Province of Prince Edward Island, it was incredible. There's going to be a financial impact given to us in the next month and I'm looking forward to seeing that.

But likewise, hon. member, this spend, there are classrooms across our province that our kids are working in projects relative to the Vancouver Olympics. Is that not worthwhile, hon. member? There are communities - 26 communities across our province this weekend - part of this. Is that not worthwhile, hon. member?

So when you see Islanders excited about an international event that is being hosted in our country, maybe people are being excited about this. Not everybody's going to be excited, but at the end of the day we are Canadians and this is a very big event for our country, and Prince Edward Island is part of it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Yes, it would be good and it's great that our children in school are doing projects up, but I'm quite sure our children in school would much sooner see their parents working than some of them on unemployment. The dollars

could have been used to stimulate employment and to stimulate the economy here in Prince Edward Island rather than a big party out in BC.

So I ask the minister again: How can she justify throwing away hundreds of thousands of dollars of the PEI money on a party out in BC when she should be looking after our own people here in Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Our government is looking after Islanders, and I stand also as minister of infrastructure in this province. Thanks to our Premier and our treasurer, our government is working to help Islanders get to work. Let's look at the numbers that our government has invested in infrastructure, into stimulus, this year alone -

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Ms. Bertram: - Madam Speaker.

Our government, provincial share in Cardigan, \$8 million. The provincial share in Charlottetown, \$16 million.

Mr. Bagnall: All because of Gail Shea.

Ms. Bertram: The provincial share in Egmont, \$13 million. In Malpeque, almost \$6 million.

So, hon. member, we have truckers, we have bricklayers, masons. We have all the tradespeople working because of our

stimulus money that taxpayers are putting towards it. People are at work and families should see that this government - and I think they do, hon. member - that we are supporting employment in this province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Deficit reduction plan

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's obvious this government certainly knows how to spend, spend, spend. The question, this government constantly has to hire consultants, needs consultants to tell them what to do. How many times do we have consultants hired over and over again? We've had a number of warnings. DBRS has warned this government that they're the only province in Canada without a plan to deal with the deficit. We also know that we've had warnings even from our federal counterparts to really push this government to take and pay attention to the spending.

My first question to the Premier: Premier, are you so desperate that you're going to hire a consultant to help you design a plan to reduce your deficit?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: No, Madam Speaker.

The bottom line is our government, as I quoted the other day from the Conference Board of Canada, is one of the only provinces that saw positive growth last year, around 0.9%. We're going to be leading the country this year, around 1.8%. They attribute that directly to our provincial stimulus package. So I'm not sure where the Leader of the Opposition is going with this. But at the end of the day, I know that the Leader of the Opposition was a consultant for a while so I don't know why she's insulting consultants today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: It's certainly important to hire consultants that know what they're doing.

My question to the Premier. Your spending is increasing at about 9% year over year and your revenue is 4%. You're going to be hitting the wall soon. My question: DBRS continues to warn this government of excessive spending. When are you going to develop a plan and when are you going to get that plan in place to get your deficit under control?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I'm very proud of our government. On the GDP ratio, our province is leading the country. I think that if you look at our deficit

situation from last year - we were around the 85 million mark. I know an update will be coming fairly soon from our Provincial Treasurer.

In relation to our entire economy, our deficit is well under control. About 35 or 40 million of that was part of a pension adjustment. Therefore, we're operating with around a 35 or \$40 million structural deficit that our government has been dealing with.

Of course, the Leader of the Opposition likes to talk out of both sides of her mouth. On one hand she's saying we're not spending enough to help out the economy and to promote jobs, and on the other hand we should be cutting. What we're doing as a government is we're taking a very balanced approach. We believe during difficult economic times it's important to invest and stimulate our economy. And that's exactly what our government is doing and that is what we will continue to do.

During the good economic times, it is a chance to save. I'd like to point out that you just have to look back to the year 2003-2004 when Canada and Prince Edward Island were growing at their fastest rates since after the Second World War boom that we experienced, and what did that government over there do? They ran the largest deficit ever in the history of this province at \$125 million.

An Hon. Member: Shame, shame!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam

Speaker, there's no plan here but there is certainly spending, spending, spending.

Question to the Premier: According to your civil service commission's annual report for 2007-2008, your government increased the bureaucracy staffing activity to the tune of 2,244 competitions. Spending, spending, spending. Account for that.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Obviously, Madam Speaker, what happened after that \$125 million deficit is the government of the day came in and laid off a lot of people in government. They cut and they slashed. You want to know where they did the majority of the cutting and slashing? It was in the health department.

Mr. Sheridan: Right on.

Premier Ghiz: They put a lot of strain into the system. That's why for a number of years in this province we heard constantly about health care being underfunded, people stressed out.

Our government came to power and, I'm sorry, but we had to correct the mistakes of the past. And that's why we're very proud that year after year after year our government has shown what its number one priority is in this province, and that is health care to make sure that Islanders can get the fundamental of all Canadian values and that is top-notch health care, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition, final question.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, my question to the Premier is simply this.

Your government continues to spend, spend, spend. What you forget about - this is 2009, November 17th. You're the Premier of the province, you keep talking about being in power. People are sick of people wanting to be in power. They want people who govern.

My question to you is: Are you comfortable with your decision to constantly spend and to increase the bureaucracy to such a high level during a recession. Are you comfortable with that decision, Premier?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Govern, Madam Speaker, is exactly what our government is doing.

After years of neglect in this province our government had to come in and start making some key investments in this province. When I look at health care, Office of Retention and Recruitment to the tune of \$3.1 million; a family medicine residency program, the accelerated nursing program, cancer patient navigator, colorectal cancer screening program, mammography, screening, Tyne Valley Health Centre, palliative home care drug program, \$11 million contribution to QEH Foundation, completed renovations to ER at the Prince County Hospital, expansion of the West Prince dialysis unit, youth substance abuse program, coverage of glucose testing strips, free emergency ambulance for seniors, modernization of the provincial drug program, investments in home care of \$4.5 million.

Our government believes in health care. Obviously the Leader of the Opposition would want to cut all of those programs, Madam Speaker, and our government's not going to do that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]