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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

THURSDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2009



Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Attorney General.

**Breakdown of EAs**

**Mr. Greenan:** Yes, Madam Speaker.

Yesterday the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Linkletter asked me for a breakdown on the number of EAs in school districts in the province. In the Eastern School District we have - these are full time equivalents - 184.79 EAs, youth service workers, 18.5, and there's one personal care attendant. In the Western School Board there are 90.27 EAs and in youth service workers, there are five. In the French School Board there are 11.23 EA positions, and youth service workers, there's a .7 position.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Speaker:** Thank you.

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

Questions by Members

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

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Autism strategy**

**Leader of the Opposition:** Sorry about that, Madam Speaker.

Who is the acting Premier today? My first question is going to the acting Premier, then.

Our province of PEI really needs to have public policy, one that sustains a high quality child care system that includes children with special needs. To the Premier: It's been a year since you promised the provincial autism strategy. Please tell us what's in that.

**Speaker:** Who's the acting Premier today?

The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

This government recognizes challenges families face with autism in this province. Actually, I had opportunity myself to meet with members of the PEI Autism Society, and of course, that society is very active here in the province to help to work with government, to partner with government, to provide the resources to deal with this challenge.

The Leader of the Opposition, her question is in regard to the autism strategy. That strategy will be unveiled by this government in the very near future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**An Hon. Member:** Hear, hear!

**Leader of the Opposition:** To the same minister, or Acting Premier. Could you tell us the three key details that are in that strategy?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I think probably the Leader of the Opposition with her vast experience in government, 27 years in the provincial bureaucracy, and of course her role now as the Leader of the Opposition, is well aware that we're not in the habit of releasing parts and pieces of strategies, and that strategy will be made known in the very near future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, we'll look forward to that strategy then when it's announced.

Will it be announced in this session?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

As I indicated, this government takes the

plight of families with autism very seriously in this province. There's been a lot of work gone into putting this strategy together, a lot of consultations with groups such as the Autism Society, and when that process is completed we will be pleased to advise the Leader of the Opposition.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

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

I'm asking the questions for the parents in support of autism, and I'm just curious, will that be this session that you're going to be able to give us the autism strategy for the province?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

We're pleased to work with the Department Education and Early Childhood Development on the evolution of this strategy, and I'm confident in saying yes, this strategy will be released before the end of this session.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Centre of excellence for autism**

**Leader of the Opposition:** To the innovation minister.

It's a year since you had a proposal to look at a centre of excellence for autism. How is that proposal?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Again, I indicated earlier that I had the opportunity to meet with members of the Autism Society, a very professional, very dedicated group of people, very knowledgeable.

We did talk about a centre of excellence and the need for an autism education program to look at training people to deal with families with autism here in the province. Those discussions are ongoing with our post-secondary institutions to look at how we can help to make the lives of families better who are dealing with autism in this province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

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

Madam Speaker.

To the same minister. According to *Hansard*, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November of 2008, you had the proposal for the centre of excellence, and now that you have the devolution model of the labour market, will you be using dollars from that to actually implement that centre of excellence, and will we see that this fall?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

**Mr. D. Currie:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. D. Currie:** Certainly some of the questions that are coming forward from the Leader of the Opposition are very important questions, Madam Speaker.

The issue with autism is impacting, and we've seen the incidence of autism rise dramatically across the province. Our government recognizes the important need. In my responsibilities as minister of health we certainly have spent some time with senior officials in the department of education, and one of the issues that we're responsible for in the preschool is the assessments.

Late last spring, after the sitting of the House, our government made a commitment that we would engage to look at the wait times in the preschool assessments. We're pleased to announce that we have made

additional investments in psychology time to support that pre-assessment screening, and we've certainly put some resources in to support these psychologists that are doing the preschool assessments. We've also made sure that - my recommendation was that if we're having challenges with the resources here provincially, we've committed to in-province contract work and out-of-province contract work to work closely with the department of education on the very important aspect of preschool assessments.

In respect to the question on the centre of excellence, we have had discussions with the Minister of Social Services and Seniors, with the Stars for Life Foundation, and our government has committed substantial commitment from the affordable housing money to the project, and generously from the minister of transportation, his kind commitment to the land on Maypoint Road. The only area of commitment that we can't commit to is the operational side. So we are progressively engaging in discussions. We're at the table. Our government will continue to work closely with families and various groups across the province to address a very serious issue.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** To the same minister, then, the minister of health.

So the centre of excellence that was committed to by the innovation minister a

year ago, will that have psychologists working out of that?

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

**Mr. D. Currie:** Right now, as the Leader of the Opposition knows, we do have an autism strategy that will come forward. I haven't been exposed to the strategy, but we have been discussing with the Stars for Life Foundation.

One of the recommendations was that we need to look - and that discussion has taken place now for over a year. As I alluded to, there's a support played by the department of transportation for land, there's the affordable housing money that comes into play under responsibility. I must remind the Leader of the Opposition that when we came into government in June of 2007, as the minister for social services I was faced with the dilemma: Do we support the decision by the Human Rights Commission to eliminate income testing for children across Prince Edward Island? We did that, we supported that, which was an investment of over \$600,000, and we're certainly proud that we continue to make the investments and raise the ceiling to support families with children with autism.

We'll certainly continue to work with the stakeholders in the communities across Prince Edward Island to make sure the lives of families, and most important, the children suffering from autism spectrum disorder, get the support they so need (Indistinct).

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

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

**Autism strategy (further)**

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

I kind of noticed the date was November 19, 2009.

My question to you, minister is, we're talking about an autism strategy. According to the parents - some of the parents that are with us here today - there has actually been no work done on an autism strategy. So could you please inform the parents here today, and the House, and the public watching at home, just what's in that strategy.

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

**Mr. D. Currie:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Just to clarify, so the House and all members understand, the autism strategy falls under the department of education, but certainly it is a cross-government approach to meeting the needs and resources for families and individuals.

As the minister responsible for health, social services, and seniors I can reassure parents who are in the gallery tonight that we are actively engaged in that discussion. I don't have the report and I haven't seen the final report but we're taking this issue very seriously. I want to reassure parents who are

in the gallery today who are anxiously awaiting, and I certainly respect their anxiety, that we are working hard as part of that strategy that will impact government departments.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

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

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

We'll move to the education minister. Would you please update the House and the parents that are with us here today on what your department's doing in regards to the autism strategy?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Attorney General.

**Mr. Greenan:** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to stand in the House and report that our government continues to work with children with the autism spectrum disorder and to provide high quality services and use the best practices.

We are considered one of the jurisdictions in the country that have a model of care for this disorder that is the envy of the rest of the country.

We have challenges, like every other jurisdiction, in recruiting specialists for this disorder, and we have been very fortunate

recently to have been able to fill two positions in preschool autism - our preschool autism coordinator and a preschool specialist. So we have been very pleased with that accomplishment, and those two people will be coming to work the first of January.

This disorder certainly is pervasive and there seems to be more and more of it in society. We in the province, with the preschool autism coordinator and the six specialists, along with the school-age autism coordinator and the six specialists, feel that we are finally at a point where we can do better service for these children and their parents.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

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

A year ago it was either the minister of social services and seniors or the education minister said: Today I'm pleased to advise we're close to filling the position of program coordinator. It was vacant for a year. I'm pleased to fill the position of the preschool autism specialist. That was supposed to happen right away because there was an excellent candidate.

January, that's 15 months it took you to do that.

My question to you, the minister of

education: Parents of young autistic children are still waiting over two years to see a specialist when it should be closer to three months. How are you going to improve that?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Attorney General.

**Mr. Greenan:** Madam Speaker, with the resources that we have in place we will be better able to serve this group of people.

Recently, as the minister of health indicated, there has been a revamping of services for preschool, for the assessment. With that, since April there have been 11 assessments in the preschool, so that definitely puts us in a position where we have 11 new cases of diagnosed autism spectrum disorder. So we are aware of that and we now have those two positions coming in January which will help to diminish that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

To the same minister. Parents tell me that when they do get that diagnosis they are often told that they are able to access some support services. They're given, I believe, \$10 an hour, but they have to go do the recruitment and hiring on their own. Although experts recommend that they receive 40 hours a week of support interventions, your government is only

providing 20 hours. Are you going to be increasing that 20 hour per week support to 40 hours a week?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Attorney General.

**Mr. Greenan:** Madam Speaker, I am sure that we will be working closely with the Autism Society, the parent groups, and the coordinators of both the preschool autism and school age autism to provide better services to the parents and especially to the students with this disorder.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** To the same minister. I'm not sure if I heard you answer about the increase from 20 hours a week to 40 hours per week. Will you be doing that, minister?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Attorney General.

**Mr. Greenan:** Madam Speaker, I am sure that we do provide the best services that we can possibly provide at this time.

This is a very fluid file and more and more is learned about this disorder and we work closely with our coordinators and our autism specialists in designing programs for these children.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, I think the minister said the best services?

This is a government that could get \$80,000 through treasury board for wine experts. These are our children. Minister, do you think \$10 an hour will pay appropriate care for a young autistic child?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Attorney General.

**Mr. Greenan:** Madam Speaker, the tutors that are trained are trained by our specialists and the coordinators.

They get the training from the people that know how to deal with issues around this disorder, and these are very well-trained people. The parents are free to hire the tutor that they wish to hire.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, one of the parents is shaking her head pretty bad in the gallery.

My question to you: Do you think you would be able to get a tutor to work with special needs children with autism disorder for \$10

an hour? How many tutors do you think an average parent would have to go through?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Attorney General.

**Mr. Greenan:** Again, Madam Speaker, families are free to hire.

Yes, we provide a \$10 an hour wage for tutors. The parents are free to hire those people from that trained group as they see fit.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

### **Branding of city raceways**

**Mr. M. Currie:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

A question for the minister of finance. Minister, I would like to know when you decided that the branded name of the Charlottetown Driving Park and the Summerside Raceway that have been in place for over 100 years was no longer acceptable to you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Sheridan:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

As we know, the Charlottetown Driving

Park and the Summerside Raceway are legendary names right across the industry, but we do have to move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. When these two tracks were looked at by the Lottery Corporation, it was decided that they needed to come forward with a new brand.

A lot of work had been done with focus groups and such that clearly made it very important that if we were going to compete in the industry from here on out we needed to have a brand change.

The unfortunate part of the whole matter was that the name change was leaked before it was talked to many of the key stakeholders, and that's what took place with all the confusion.

Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Question to the same minister. Minister, could you please inform Islanders at what time, or what date, that your Cabinet decided to make these changes?

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Sheridan:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I would suggest that this name change went through Cabinet probably in the month of January of 2009 and all of the talk around what it would formulate with the ask from the Lottery Corporation.

A number of focus groups had taken place over the past year, before it came to Cabinet at that time, and they were talking to both tourists and Islanders alike. Everyone realized that the CDPEC was a worn-out moniker that was not working with regard to drawing people from off Island.

We need to compete with the new entity that's taking place in Moncton in the next 12 months and we had to be ready to make sure that we were able to compete.

Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

A question to the minister of education who is also responsible for the City of Summerside. Were you in favour of this name change?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Attorney General.

**Mr. Greenan:** Madam Speaker, Red Shores at Summerside Raceway is certainly a name that I can live with.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, that was a good answer.

A question to the Minister of Agriculture. You represent all the farming community. Were you in favour of this name change also?

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

**Mr. Webster:** Madam Speaker, yes, I support the name change.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** I have a question for the hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour who has a large family of horse owners in her district, Rustico-Emerald, who have spoken to me about this name change. Can you tell me if you were in favour of this name change?

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

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

I certainly am pleased to represent such a thriving harness industry district, and this was a Cabinet decision.

Thank you.

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

**An Hon. Member:** So she supported it, too.

**Mr. M. Currie:** She supported it, so I would say all of Cabinet supported this.

Question back to the minister of finance.

How did you and your Cabinet come up with this lovely name of Red Shores and casino?

**An Hon. Member:** Have you ever been to the beach?

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Sheridan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

When we took over the racetracks here on Prince Edward Island in the spring of 2007, at that time the casino at the track was dripping red ink. We needed to move forward and make sure that this establishment turned the corner and started to make some money. I'm pleased to stand here today and say that we turned the corner in 2008-2009 and they did make money.

You have to continue to change with the markets and make sure you stay up with the times. Red Shores Racetrack and Casino and Charlottetown Driving Park has run very clearly with all of those that are looking to come to the track. All of the industry has been very pleased with the changes. Summerside has enveloped this name change to a fantastic extent. Everyone involved in it is very happy with the changes, and the change in Summerside has brought about a greater crowd, as was expected. There was no kickback whatsoever.

Thank you.

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

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

There was a five year plan put in place that did show in year four and year five that the facility would show a profit, which happens to be now.

Minister, you said in your interview on *Compass* that there was tremendous work done with this name change and that the name of Red Shores was off the chart. Will you please table the results of that focus group?

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Sheridan:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

This was all done by the Atlantic Lottery Corporation. If that's available to be tabled, I'd be more than happy to do it. There were a number of focus groups with both tourists and Islanders alike, including some horsemen. This was going to be very clearly vetted through all of the horsemen's group as we move forward. We have the industry association heads and Harness Racing PEI come forward with us as we went through this name change process.

We wanted to make sure that everything would be cleared through all of those key stakeholders, and that was the format until the name change was leaked. As is the case on Prince Edward Island, in many cases when some people inside can't be trusted with the information.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, if it was inside information that would be his own bureaucrats.

Anyway, in your interview you said with Bruce Rainnie that you had interviewed and consulted with Harness Racing PEI, a couple of individuals. Could you please tell Islanders what couple of individuals that you consulted with regarding this name change?

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Sheridan:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Harness Racing PEI is the government agency that oversees harness racing, and the whole board was in full knowledge of this, and was very well briefed on what was taking place. As they know across the floor, this was something to try to address the down slide of the harness racing industry here on Prince Edward Island.

We here on Prince Edward Island are the envy of all of Canada for what we have done with harness racing. The amount of money that we invest in the harness racing industry here dwarfs all those that are spent on our sister provinces. What we needed to do here was continue in the market plan that would allow this influx of cash to continue. Once that format was explained to the harness racing industry, it was very well accepted and everyone was very happy with the change, and understand that it is bringing new, increased excitement around the

establishment.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

### **Language training wait-list for immigrants**

**Mr. Vessey:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question is for the hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning. Earlier this fall there were concerns raised by the opposition about the number of immigrants registered with the PEI Association of Newcomers who are on the waiting list for language training. Could the minister please update the House on the status of the wait-list for this language training?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I want to thank the hon. Government House Leader for this question. We recognize here in the province that probably one of the greatest barriers of transition of our immigrants into society here on Prince Edward Island is that language barrier.

While it is a federal responsibility to provide language training, we here in the province clearly recognize the importance of helping our immigrants to adjust quickly and

transition into society here on Prince Edward Island. For that reason we have invested in language training. We've increased investment in 2007, again in 2008, and again in 2009.

In the lead up to this academic year we worked with Study Abroad Canada and with Holland College to provide 200 more seats. We were aware at the time, I'll admit, that it probably wasn't going to be sufficient to meet the need, but we had to let a process unfold, and that being the enrollment of students in the fall, and then we would take a look at it to see how many more seats needed to be made available.

That process did unfold and in October we purchased 50 additional seats, as did the federal government. I know the Leader of the Opposition yesterday raised concern over the waiting list. I just want to update the House and the Leader of the Opposition that as of today there is no waiting list, and that every immigrant who has sought language training in this province has been offered language training.

Thank you.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Sherwood.

### **Review of Seniors Home Repair Program**

**Mr. Bagnall:** That's the first question he's answered in three years.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question today is for the Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors. Last spring I asked the minister to consider raising the income threshold for the Seniors Home Repair Program, which he did, and seniors in my area and all across the province are very appreciative for that.

However, seniors who have deeded their homes over to their children for many various reasons, but have a legally prepared life interest document, are still not eligible to access the program. Many of these seniors have lived in these homes for many years under this arrangement and will continue to do so for many years into the future.

My question is: Would the minister consider reviewing the policy so that these seniors may have the ability to take advantage of this great program?

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

**Mr. D. Currie:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Yes, the program has been reinstated since we came into government. Our commitment last year was approximately \$500,000 back to the Seniors Home Repair Program.

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

**Mr. D. Currie:** The program has been well received by seniors all across Prince Edward Island. I get some extremely powerful comments from seniors who are on very strict fixed incomes making comments about that new window or furnace or roof repair.

In all of our districts across Prince Edward Island seniors are benefitting, and as part of our aging at home strategy we are encouraging and trying to work and put the supports in place to keep seniors in their home.

In respect to the question, Madam Speaker, the Seniors Home Repair Program right now - and a compliment to the MLA from Sherwood - is we have been able to raise the threshold from 30,000 to 35,000, which has captured a high level of more interest from seniors across the province.

We are evaluating the program yearly. Right now we're not in the position to support that. I think we have about 25 seniors that are living in their homes that don't have a life interest, but it's certainly something that I'll take back to the department.

I know we still have a waiting list and a high volume of seniors that are waiting, who are owners and are looking for program support. We'll look into it and as we evaluate the program, those seniors - as I've said to you before in the past, and to other members - those seniors are living in those homes, and we want to keep them in their homes as long as we possibly can.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

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

### **Branding of city raceways (further)**

**Mr. M. Currie:** Thank you very much,

Madam Speaker.

A question for the Minister of Transportation and Public Works, who also has a very large population of horse owners in his district. Quite a few of them have called me, they were quite upset with the name changes that you brought forward, you and your Premier. Anyway, I want to know if you were in favour of this name change for the Charlottetown Driving Park and Summerside Raceway?

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

**Mr. MacKinley:** Thank you very much.

Yes, I'm in favour of calling it - what was it? - Red Shore Driving Park at Charlottetown Driving Park. No. I'm in favour of Red Shores at the Charlottetown Driving Park. I think the gentleman and the women in my area that are involved in horses are happy with that name. Red Shores at the Charlottetown Driving Park.

Of course, all the fast horses come from out my way, as you know. They're not lame like the one you had.

**Speaker:** Thank you, minister.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. M. Currie:** We know who's lame. That's a lot of you fellows over there.

Question for the minister of finance. As the minister that's responsible for the harness

racing industry in this province, I'm just wondering why you didn't call a public meeting in Summerside and another public meeting in Summerside to hear from the industry stakeholders and discuss this change that you have dictated upon them?

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Sheridan:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Let's call a spade a spade here in this room and understand what's taking place here. The harness racing industry of Prince Edward Island is in great debt to the Government of Prince Edward Island to make sure that this industry continues to go along in the fashion that it is now. They have received funding to continue their breeding programs with their racing programs. We lead the country in new owners, in new horses. Everyone inside the industry understands fully what the government is intending to do here.

With regard to the question from the hon. member, all of the meetings that were going to take place with the key stakeholders to explain what was taking place would have without the leak coming forward.

But it's just as we say here - and it is a great joke around Cabinet and caucus - with regard to the name, because Islanders will never call it anything different than the Charlottetown Driving Park and Summerside Raceway. We didn't expect anything different.

If those that don't understand it at this point know that we're marketing to people off-

Island to ensure that we continue to use it as a tourism draw to Prince Edward Island. CDPEC did not resonate with those people. We need it to capture their interest and make sure they continue to come to our facility when the new spot was opened in Moncton.

The industry is fully behind this. Anyone that knows anything to do with the finances of this industry understands and appreciates what this government did for them.

Thank you very much.

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

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, I beg to differ because I don't think the industry was fully behind it because they read about it in the newspaper of this backroom deal that you guys had done.

What I think is that you guys probably owe them an apology for not coming forward and discussing this with the industry stakeholders and recognize what they contribute to our economy here.

Minister, will you indicate that you made a mistake and apologize to the industry for not having any public meetings?

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Bagnall:** And also for saying it was a joke that we changed the name.

**Mr. Sheridan:** Is this a question or -

**Speaker:** The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

**Mr. Sheridan:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The industry has thanked me personally and has thanked all of our government for taking care of their industry. They understand what is needed financially from this government to make them viable.

On a day when we're talking about autism in this House, I find it a tad embarrassing that these questions come forward on harness racing.

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

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, I think the minister of finance has embarrassed himself enough here today with his answers, especially when he put \$50,000 into the industry this year and they put \$1.8 million into a rockabilly concert in Cavendish.

### **Olympic Torch Relay**

A question for the Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour. I received a lot of phone calls last night regarding the torch relay, the route that's taking place that's coming through PEI. I see that Kings County, rural PEI, has been left out again by your government. I'm just wondering why you wouldn't have went through Murray Harbour where Brad Richards comes from, Murray River where Brandon Gormley comes from, through Montague where a

member built a new Wellness Centre, and then on in to Charlottetown? Why couldn't you have captured some of Kings County? Why did you pick the route you got?

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

**Mr. Brown:** Here she goes. You're going to be on the ropes after this. I'd duck.

**Mr. MacKinley:** You might as well leave.

**Mr. Brown:** I'd duck if I were you.

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

We have a very exciting weekend ahead of us on Prince Edward Island. It's going to be travelling through our wonderful province and rural Prince Edward Island. It's going to come off the boat in Wood Islands. It's very exciting. I have the times here that I can table later and the celebrations that are going to be held across Prince Edward Island.

I have the list of the communities: Summerside, Wellington, Abrams Village, Lennox Island, Kensington, Margate, Clinton, New London, Stanley Bridge, Cavendish, North Rustico, Rusticoville, New Glasgow, Hunter River, Winsloe, Cornwall, Charlottetown, Stratford, Pownal, Cherry Valley, Vernon Bridge, Belfast, Wood Islands, Bedeque, Kinkora.

Borden. The celebration was just so exciting in the hon. Minister of Agriculture's district a whole school has got involved.

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

**Ms. Bertram:** The whole school is coming out in Borden, Madam Speaker, and it's just going to be a wonderful occasion. We are having a breakfast out in Hunter River on Sunday morning. Come on over, hon. member.

**Mr. Brown:** He could use a couple of pancakes.

**Ms. Bertram:** We invite you out to rural Queens County. We love it there, and we love all rural Prince Edward Island with the torch relay.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** I'll try the question again, Madam Speaker.

I just want to know. By the map I'm looking at, it clearly indicates that Kings County has been ignored and forgotten just like what your government does with every issue. I'm just wondering why you left out Kings County in this route?

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

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

We have a wonderful torch relay, again, event for the weekend. Vancouver Olympic Committee, obviously if you look at the map of Canada it can't go through the entire

regions of every province. We are going from the Wood Islands ferry. Obviously it's coming from Nova Scotia, from eastern Prince Edward Island. It's not going completely up west, unfortunately, it can't. But it is going up - it is going to be in western parts of the province, it's in the eastern parts of the province and in central parts of the province.

The city of Charlottetown is having a huge celebration. The Premier of BC will be here on Saturday, which is very exciting. Hon. Campbell will be here and there are going to be celebrations in Cavendish. National parks are getting together to do a great big celebration out there, and in Summerside at Credit Union Place.

Communities have come together to celebrate the Olympic Torch Relay. Hon. member, I encourage you to get out to rural Prince Edward Island and come out and celebrate on Prince Edward Island.

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

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, they talk about one Island, one community and it seems to be in one riding and one community, and that's your community.

Can you please tell us how many stops they're going to make in your community, and how you ignored all of Kings County? Seven or eight stops in your -

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of

Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour.

**Ms. Bertram:** Madam Speaker, there is one stop in my district and that is Cavendish and the federal government that are working together with Parks Canada.

There is only stop, hon. member.

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

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, it certainly looks like a lot more stops, but I'll ask again.

Why, when you drew out this map for the torch relay, did you totally ignore Kings County? Why did you?

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Madam Speaker, obviously this route has been worked together with the VANOC committee and we are very pleased.

We took on the initiative, though, as a government to put together community activity kits with flags so that communities can have extra materials to celebrate.

Hon. member, there's not a lot of stops for the torch relay but they're going through communities. Again, I want to thank Charlottetown and Summerside and Cavendish. Those are the three main stops that it's making. But the other communities

that it's going through have done a tremendous job, and there are about 26 that have really worked hard to do this.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Final, did you say?

Madam Speaker, in this map that I have you invited me to go to Hunter River to your torch relay. Can you please point out on the map where in Kings County I can go for a torch relay?

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

**Mr. Brown:** We're one Island, we're one Island.

**Ms. Bertram:** Hon. member, the hon. minister of fisheries and rural development can go to the area relative to his county and area of the province, whether it's in the west end or the east end or central, Madam Speaker.

It wasn't possible for it to go through every community on Prince Edward Island.

**Mr. Bagnall:** It's not coming to Kings County.

**Ms. Bertram:** The same thing happened with the Canada Games Relay. It can't go through every community. We're so very

pleased that it's going through as many as I listed.

It's going to be a great weekend. I really encourage the opposition - because they're trying to paint such a negative picture of the Olympics - get on board, folks. This is a great event for our province, a great event for our country, a great event for our world. Get excited, get involved.

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

**Speaker:** Order, please!

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, final question.

**Mr. M. Currie:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I guess the people in rural PEI that are outside of Charlottetown are extremely disappointed, and they have been for a couple of years now, about the way the government treats people in rural PEI. I know that the people in Kings County are extremely disappointed, not only in the Premier and the minister, that Kings County has been left out again.

I ask you. There's still some time. Will you look at changing this so that the people in Kings County can participate in this torch route?

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

**Ms. Bertram:** Madam Speaker, I encourage the hon. member to go back to his district,

go back to eastern Prince Edward Island, and encourage them to go to the stops that are on this weekend.

Islanders are getting together, it is exciting. Kids across the province are getting excited, and families. Hon. member, this is great, this is great for rural Prince Edward Island. It's great for our one Island community. Get excited, get involved.

Thanks.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)!

**Speaker:** Order, please!

[End of Question Period]