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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

FRIDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2009

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

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

**Number of C&D sites**

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

The other day the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters asked me the question: to produce the number of C&D sites on Prince Edward Island. I'll table that. There are five sites on Prince Edward Island, and two of them are in Kings County.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Meetings re: Vancouver Olympics**

**Ms. Docherty:** Madam Speaker, on Tuesday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir made the comment regarding the Vancouver Olympics, that quote: "Your staff that's been there all summer..."

I'd like to tell the House that the meetings that have happened over the course of the fiscal year - 19 meetings in total - which include all my staff, not just my deputy minister, of which two were trips to Vancouver, four were meetings in Charlottetown, two were meetings with the Atlantic deputy ministers who are part of this, and 11 teleconferenced meetings.

Thank you.

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

Questions by Members

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

**Allergic reaction to batch of H1N1 vaccine**

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

My first question today is to the health minister. We've just seen a report that was released that suggested a specific batch of H1N1 vaccine caused some people in certain regions of the country to have a severe allergic reaction. Would the health minister please give us an update on this?

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

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

That is a good question. I did absorb that information late last night in the media and have some questions and inquiries out to Dr. Heather Morrison, our public health officer. We're scheduling a press conference today at 3:00 p.m. to update the public on information.

I want to commend Dr. Morrison for her leadership. She's done an amazing job. We're in a very challenging time here in the province, as well as other jurisdictions across the country, to respond to the changes and the direction that we're getting, and working closely with the Public Health

Agency of Canada.

I respect the question by the Leader of the Opposition and we'll make sure that we update the public this afternoon - I know there's a meeting, a conference call, with all public health officers across the country this morning - to get updated, detailed information to Islanders this afternoon.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you. To the same minister, we recognize the great work, too, that Dr. Morrison and Lamont Sweet do as well, and all your staff.

Another question though that was given to me this morning. Some people were worried about: Do we have any vaccine that is going to be recalled? Will that be covered at your press conference today?

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

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

It was identified that there was a batch of H1N1 that failed to meet the standards by the supplier, GSK. Obviously that is a concern of myself and certainly a concern of Dr. Morrison. That information will be discussed and debated at length this morning in the national conference call with the Public Health Agency of Canada and we'll

make sure that we provided the updated and accurate information that we have as a result of that conference call this afternoon at 3:00 p.m.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you. It's so nice to have a minister that does answer questions.

### **Funding for early childhood system**

My next question is to the acting Premier. Premier. While everybody appreciates all the work being done to create a long-term strategy and vision for licensed early childhood system, centres and educators are needing to make significant life change decisions without having adequate information from both sides of the scenario.

My question to you: As the initial investment into PEI licensed childcare system, will your government immediately commit to leaving the \$2.9 million to the licensed EC system?

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

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

We value the great work done by the early childhood sector here in this province. With the insightful move to move kindergarten

into the public school system, we do realize that has potential to have an impact on the early childhood sector in this province.

That's why there's currently being an evaluation done, and a financial evaluation done, on the early childhood sector. There's an RFP out for consultation. I know that all early childhood sector licensed operations in the province have been contacted to allow them to have their input and to discuss possible investment into the future.

We're waiting on the results of that financial impact study being conducted by MRSB, and when we have that it'll be very helpful in making decisions as to how to invest in this very important sector on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** To the same minister: Mister Minister, are you committing, then, that the 2.9 million will be there for this sector for the short term?

**Speaker:** Sorry, I was conferring with the Clerk. Who was your question to?

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

**Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

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

As I indicated, we certainly value the importance of this sector to Prince Edward Island, the great work they do in fostering the early education of our young people. These people are our future and it's very important that they get off to the best start possible.

That's why we invested in the Best Start Program -

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

**Mr. Campbell:** - and that's why we have made the decision to bring kindergarten into the public school system. Again, there is an analysis being conducted as we speak. We're awaiting the results of that analysis. I know myself, the Premier, we've met the education minister. We've met with members from the early childhood sector. We'll continue to meet and consult with that group. We'll await the results of that evaluation and make decisions as to how to invest in this important sector on Prince Edward Island.

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

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** A question to the same minister. Mr. Minister, the long-term strategy is probably a good move. Moving kindergarten into the school system was probably a good policy decision -

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** - but the question for child care facilities is they want to know: Is the funding going to be there? Because right now they are deciding, today and tomorrow, whether they're going to stay open or close. Especially in your community of eastern PEI, there's about five centres affected.

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

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

I think it can't be overstated the importance of investing in the young people of this province, and the early childhood sector being a big part of that with our newborns to four year olds. We want to invest in sectors that will lead to the betterment of Prince Edward Island and this is certainly one. We have an inherent responsibility to give our young people in this province the best start possible, and that's what we're going to do.

The Leader of the Opposition makes reference to my area. I've had the opportunity to meet on several occasions with the early childhood operators in my own part of the province - a wonderful group of people - and I've urged them to participate in the review process being conducted as we speak.

Again, once we have the information, it'll be very helpful in making decisions of how we invest in this important sector on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you.

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

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** The same minister.

Mr. Minister, will you support - because these centres want this \$2.9 million to remain in their centres so they can stay open - will you be supporting this?

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

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

I think it's very important to await the results of the analysis being conducted, to look at what the shortfall is in our early childhood sector.

The Leader of the Opposition stands here this morning and wants to commit a dollar figure. Is it enough? I don't know the answer to that. We need to wait until the evaluation is completed until we have all of the information and all of the facts and to make sound decisions based on good information and how we invest in this important sector in Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Madam

Speaker, it sounds like the minister is not sure that he's going to support keeping the \$2.9 million in this system.

My next question is to the same minister. Recruitment and retention of trained and certified professionals is critical to quality childcare. The province is working on an HR study that will identify potential solutions and recommendations for consideration to support the retention of trained, certified professional ECEs.

However, there's also a great deal of opportunity at the time for some of them who meet the criteria to move into the school system. This is leaving early childhood care and educators with a tough decision: Should they move into the school system and make \$39,000 or stay in the early childhood sector and make \$20,000?

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

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

As the minister responsible for post-secondary education, I'm very pleased that the work has been done in conjunction with both Holland College and UPEI to offer an accelerated program to allow early childhood educators to transition into kindergarten teaching in the public school system.

We've looked at what's happened in other jurisdictions in the past when kindergarten was transitioned into the public school system. We've modelled after what's happened in other jurisdictions and what's

proven to be successful.

I would suggest - the Leader of the Opposition says that they have a tough decision in front of them. I believe that they have an opportunity in front of them. We are looking at investing in the early childhood sector and also we are looking at making sure that we have well-trained, well-experienced professionals teaching our young children as we transition kindergarten into the school system in this province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, to the same minister.

Mr. Minister, will there be salary enhancements for ECE professionals?

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

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

Again, the Leader of the Opposition is pressing for decisions without having the information. Maybe those are tactics that were used by the previous administration, but we believe in having all of the facts, all of the information in front of us, to allow us to make sound decisions.

We are currently conducting an assessment of the financial impact on the early

childhood sector in this province. When we have those results we'll be making decisions and those decisions will be made public to the Leader of the Opposition and everyone else 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. Mr. Minister, it's November 20<sup>th</sup>, it's the third year of your mandate.

My question to you: Your government decided to change the school entry age for children going to kindergarten and school. That has a great impact on the child care sector in terms of wouldn't you have done your cost-benefit analysis and your long-term strategy before making those decisions?

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

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

I want to commend the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Attorney General, and the staff that work in that department.

Certainly they looked at the research that indicated that earlier entry into the school

system in this province is beneficial to the population of this province. We made that decision.

Again, we are investing. We are investing in kindergarten entering into the school system. We will invest in the early childhood sector in this province to ensure that the young people of this province have every opportunity to be well-educated, to be great contributors to the economy, and to the society of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, I think it's important to remind the House and public that this government made decisions with no consultation in March of 2008 to make those changes in ages.

In addition to that, when we asked the education minister whether there'd be further changes, he said no but your Premier yes. But we'll leave that minister alone for a while and we'll go to the minister of fisheries and rural development.

Parents are struggling across the province to access child care, especially in rural PEI. To the rural development minister: What specifically is in the rural development strategy to ensure these centres will be kept open?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. LeClair:** Madam Speaker, it's true that early childhood is very important to rural PEI, and I've had discussions as well with the groups in my area.

As far as in the rural development plan strategy when it comes out, we'll see it's going to cover a broad range of aspects and areas, and I'm sure that every area will be taken under consideration.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** To the same minister. Mr. Minister, could you highlight two, perhaps, actions that are in that rural development strategy directly related to child care?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. LeClair:** No, Madam Speaker, I will not be highlighting any aspects of the strategy yet, but I'm sure when it comes out I'll be only too glad to highlight them.

Thank you.

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

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

Tignish has one of the child care centres that are at risk of closing. My next question is to the innovation and advanced learning minister.

**PNP non-disclosure form for staff**

Mr. Minister, in the Provincial Nominee Program, some staff had to sign a non-disclosure form. What was the purpose of this form?

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

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

The Leader of the Opposition, with her 27 years of experience in the public service of this province, should be well aware that it's very common for employees with the province to sign non-disclosure forms and to take oaths of - you're dealing with public information, and the private information of individuals in this province and other provinces and other countries. Non-disclosure statements are to protect the private interests of individuals, and that's what we're about in this Province of Prince Edward Island.

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, then. Mr. Minister, in regards to this particular non-disclosure form, who designed it?

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

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) Probably you did in the (Indistinct).

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

I think it'd be fair to say that when you're looking at non-disclosure there are a lot of technical and legal issues and it would be up to legal counsel to design non-disclosure statements in this province.

Thank you.

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

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

To the same minister: When was this particular non-disclosure form put into place?

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

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

I'm not certain of the exact day but I can refer that question back to staff, and I'll be pleased to report that date back to the House.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

So you will bring that to the House Tuesday of next week?

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

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

As soon as that information is available I'll bring it back to the House.

Thank you.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Since you're the innovation minister, I'm sure a quick e-mail to your staff, you'd have the answer shortly.

In addition to when was it put in place, my next question is: What is the length of time the non-disclosure actually covers? Is it for life? Is it for six months? Is it for a year? What's the length of time?

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

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

Again, going back, the Leader of the Opposition continues to talk about her 27 years of experience as a public servant of this province. She should be well aware that non-disclosure statements continue on forever to ensure that the private information of individuals in this province and other areas is protected.

Thank you.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, typically with non-disclosures there are terms and criteria that cover that area, but we'll ask the next question to the minister.

Mr. Minister, the Premier and the previous minister confirmed that Mr. Billy Dow was the lawyer for IIDL. Was it Mr. Dow that designed this particular form?

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

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

We employ the services of many legal firms in the city and in this province.

**An Hon. Member:** It could have been John Carr.

**Mr. Campbell:** To say, Madam Speaker, that one lawyer created the disclosure form, I would suggest that there was input from various legal services in the province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

The Premier and the previous minister had

confirmed that Mr. Billy Dow did all the work in regards to the PNP. Did he design this disclosure form?

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

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

If I recall correctly, I believe that the Premier and the previous minister informed this House and the people of Prince Edward Island that there were a number of firms involved in the PNP. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition has documentation where the statement was made that Billy Dow did all the work on PNP. If she has it, I urge her to produce and table it here in the Legislature.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Actually, the question is to you, Mr. Minister Would you find out and prove to us who actually did the work on that particular form, and will you bring that blank form to the House and table it here next Tuesday?

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

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

Again, I will check with staff on the question from the Leader of the Opposition,

and if that information is available I'll be pleased to bring it back.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, I'm surprised, because the Auditor General has briefed this minister about all the issues on the management side of this program in January.

The report's been out since April. Administrative responsibility lies with government. My question to the same minister. Mr. Minister, actually it's very much a standard practice for government to have people to take an oath of confidentiality, but it's interesting that in the IIDI office only certain people were asked to do a non-disclosure. Would you explain that?

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

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

I'd think it'd be fair to say that in any department there are different staff members dealing with different levels of information. I think it's only fair and only due diligence to ensure that the information with respect to individuals, that that private information is protected, and a non-disclosure statement is a way to do that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** (Indistinct) Mr. Minister, do all your program officers providing service in PNP, did they all sign this non-disclosure?

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

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

There are two types of - there are contract employees, and there are civil service employees. I believe that civil service employees are asked to take the oath of confidentiality, and terms of a contract can include a non-disclosure statement.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** To the same minister. Mr. Minister, what we're asking is: Were there people, program officers, both contract and civil servants - actually you have really public servants working for you in this section. My question to you: Did they all have to sign the non-disclosure?

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

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

I can review that as well to see which staff members signed a non-disclosure statement,

and I'll be pleased to do that, and when that information is available I'll be pleased to take it back.

Thank you.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Mr. Minister, you've been minister of this department since January. There are severe issues in it and your management responsibility is to do due diligence. I am shocked that you continue to not pay any attention on this file.

My question to you is: Mr. Minister, when you bring the blank form back, and the list of people that had to sign it, and the list of other people who didn't sign it, would you also bring a list of people and their positions in regards to who signed the form?

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

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

Perhaps I'd urge the Leader of the Opposition maybe to get to the point. I told her, I said I will review that information, review the non-disclosure statement. I will instruct staff to gather that information, and when it's available I'll be pleased to bring it back.

Thank you.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, the public is getting awful tired of no answers from this government.

You've had this responsibility since January. It's been the whole spring, summer, and now we're into the fall. Can you bring all that information back to the House on Tuesday of next week? What's the problem?

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

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

The Leader of the Opposition talks about due diligence and review and oversight and all this, and I'm very pleased that this government is reacting to two things. One is this, and the other is this. This is the report of the Auditor General, and this is the conflict commissioner, two very highly trained individuals in positions, and they are professionals, to provide this type of oversight.

The Auditor General has made 20 recommendations; 17 of those recommendations have been implemented and the other three are ongoing. I would suggest that this government is doing its due diligence in providing oversight.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Madam

Speaker, it's kind of ironic.

Both of those documents are about other people's work. What this document's about is actually your work. You have the administrative responsibility to follow Treasury Board guidelines on administration. My question to you: Are you going to bring that information back next Tuesday? What is the problem?

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

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

I don't believe there is a problem. I told the Leader of the Opposition I would meet with staff, ask them to gather that information, and when it's ready I'll be pleased to bring it back.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, my question to the same minister.

That information should be readily available. If you had looked at the files, if you had discussed with your deputies, with your Neil Stewart, etc., you'd have that information perhaps by the end of today. Will you guarantee it's going to be back on the floor of the House on Tuesday?

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

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

**Ms. Dunsford:** Tuesday. What time? What time?

**Mr. Campbell:** The Leader of the Opposition talks of irony. She seems to believe that she knows what information should be readily available at IID. Last week she was an expert on conflict of interest, and last session she was an expert in the role of the Auditor General. It's great to have a leader of the opposition with so many different skills.

I told her I will discuss with staff. When that information is available, when I have that information collected, I'll be pleased to bring it back.

Thank you.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you. To the same minister, then. Mr. Minister, would you check and confirm whether it was just staff that received bonuses that had to sign the non-disclosure? Would you check that and bring that back to the House?

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

**Mr. Campbell:** Madam Speaker, I believe that the Leader of the Opposition already asked a question of who was required to sign non-disclosure.

I told the Leader of the Opposition over and

over and over again I will meet with staff, I will ask them to gather that information, and when it's ready I'll be pleased to bring it back.

Thank you.

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

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

When you're managing a company, or when you're managing government business, you should know this information. But my question to you then, minister, is this. Other staff at IIDI did not have to sign the non-disclosure. So can you tell me what the purpose is of the different policy?

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

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

As I indicated earlier, there are different contracts. Certainly any contract employee would have the opportunity to review the contract offer, and some would choose, perhaps, to seek legal advice before signing a contract. I think that's a great idea. There are different terms and conditions to different contracts. There's also the oath of confidentiality that's in the public service of this province. It depends on the particular employee, the particular contract, and it can differ. I'm sure that the Leader of the Opposition is well aware of that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

To the same minister. Was this actually a non-disclosure form for the protection of public information, or was it a gag order so that staff could not disclose what was really going on in the department? Was it, Mr. Minister?

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

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

Here we go again, some more of the Leader of the Opposition's smear campaign, talking about gag orders. As I indicated, non-disclosure statements are for public protection, to ensure them that when they enter into contracts or dealings with government that that information is protected. It's due diligence and it's in fairness and it's the right thing to do for private individuals in this province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Lobster prices**

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

My question today is for the Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development. This year PEI saw the lowest prices for lobster in the last 25 years, down over 45% in the last two years. In October of this year Intrafish Media released a report from the perishables group that said seafood sales in the United States, including lobster, are up 100% this year. Also, John Sackton from Seafood.com has recently said that most restaurants in the U.S. have not lowered their menu prices this year at all.

With this in mind, and the fact that Nova Scotia received \$1.50 a pound more than PEI this spring, what is your department doing to try to make sure these drastic discrepancies don't happen again next year?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

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

It is a good question, and it's an ongoing issue. Definitely the downturn in the U.S. economy, our biggest market, was a big issue and the fact that sales of lobster were up in that market is a good thing. But the information that we have is that wholesalers were paying a lower price for the product in order to move it through the market.

As far as what we're doing, in the past few months we've been very busy promoting and developing new markets. We had a lobster initiative and promotion here on PEI in May. We've had a four-city tour over the summer, which was extremely successful. I was in Toronto, at the Toronto one. We had one in Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver as well. At the Toronto one there was a great

number of chefs and industry people, buyers and media there, and the reports that came out of that were very valuable, and there were a lot of media reports that moved our product and promoted our product across Canada and the States out of that promotion.

Recently we had a trade mission to China to promote and develop new markets, and Italy and Spain as well. All that, in connection with our Lobster Council of Canada was recently formed for the Maritimes here. All sectors of the industry are working together to try and promote and develop new markets, and certainly get the issue of pricing to a stable level where the fishers are making money, and the processors and everybody are able to survive.

We also have our lobster industry roundtable on PEI here made up of all sectors of the industry as well, and doing a very good job, getting along very well, and discussing all the aspects of the market, pricing included.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** Thank you.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Mr. McGeoghegan:** Supplementary question. This is a severe situation for fishermen, and they cannot survive another year like this. Does the department think it's time for a marketing board of such in the lobster fishery to get to the bottom of the difference in price?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. LeClair:** If that's an area where the industry wants to go, the fishers and the processors, that'll be discussed at these roundtables that I just told you about, at the national level and our council as well, at the roundtable. If that's an area that the industry thinks it needs to go, we'll be discussing that and we're open for discussions on that.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** Thank you.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

#### **Status of five-point lobster plan**

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

My question is also to the Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development. As part of the five-point lobster plan, low-interest loan was reopened. Can you update the House on the status of this activity and this plan please, hon. minister?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

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

As the hon. member across won't answer that one or -

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

**Mr., LeClair:** As far as our five-point plan, it's a very good question. I think it's working exceptionally well. We've basically moved on every aspect of our plan. The canner purchase this spring worked well. We bought somewhere in the vicinity of 80 to 100,000 pounds of lobster. One of the big aspects of that particular initiative was it gave us the opportunity through AVC to do blood tests and blood work to see how lobsters did hold in the pound and see how long they could be kept. Actually, they did keep very well. The results were very good on that aspect.

We reopened our low-interest loan program.

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

**Mr. LeClair:** We have a number of fishers that have taken that up already, and I'm sure there'll be a lot more after the tax season this spring one day when they do their season taxes and they'll be applying for the loan as well. We put out 20 million already, we've put out another 1.5 million so far since we're reopened the loan. So that uptake is really being seen across the industry.

I've discussed some of our marketing initiative. We're partnering with ACOA on a number of initiatives in marketing, and there is a number of initiatives being done through the PEI Seafood Processors Association as well in product development and marketing.

The plan is working very well. The rationalization program, as you heard, we got it going this fall to get (Indistinct) -

**Speaker:** Hon. minister, I'd ask you to wrap

up your answer.

**Mr. LeClair:** I just wanted to catch every part of the plan.

Anyway, the rationalization is working well. We're just waiting for the federal government to come up with their part of the money so we can continue this and keep those fishers who took their gear off the water out of the industry because the catches were up.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

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

I want to thank the minister for implementing my plan and putting it forward. I wish I could have answered those questions, but this is asking the questions, not answering them.

### **Lobster processing needs**

To the minister of fisheries, Madam Speaker.

My question to the minister: Minister, has the industry been telling you that we need more processing on Prince Edward Island?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. LeClair:** Yes, Madam Speaker, I've heard that from a number of fishers across the Island that they would like to see more processing on PEI.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

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

Mr. Minister, I understand - and I know that's what I'm hearing too, that they need more processing. They believe that with more processing we'll get a higher price for our lobster here on Prince Edward Island. Has your department done any research on that or can you verify that?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. LeClair:** No, Madam Speaker, I can't verify that.

It's an ongoing thing. We're looking into it at all times, but I can't verify that statement that you made.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

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

I know, minister, you met with Ocean Choice last year to try to get the agreement for lobster opened up so that we could get more -

**Mr. MacKinley:** Who made that agreement? (Indistinct).

**Mr. Bagnall:** - so that we could get more processing - maybe the minister of transportation would like to get up and answer that?

What I'm trying to find out is you met with Ocean Choice to talk about opening up the agreement. Are you going to open up the agreement to allow more processing to take place on PEI?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. LeClair:** Ocean Choice is a big player in the processing industry on PEI and we meet with them on a regular basis, and we discuss all aspects of the fishery and processing as a whole.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**Mr. Bagnall:** To the same minister, Madam Speaker.

You met with them last year, you discussed the opening of this deal, and then you came back and you said that we made some concessions with them. Could you tell us what those concessions were that you made with Ocean Choice?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

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

I don't recall ever coming back and telling you or anyone else that I made concessions with Ocean Choice. They are a valued and huge player in the industry here on PEI. They process a lot of lobster. But I don't remember making that statement that we made some concessions.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from

Montague-Kilmuir.

**Mr. Bagnall:** Thank you. It was in the *Guardian* on one of your interviews and that's what your comments were.

Minister, do you think we need more processing on PEI?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. LeClair:** Madam Speaker, as I told the hon. member earlier, processing on PEI is an issue that we're looking at. Whether we need more or the markets have to come up to make the industry more viable is another question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**Mr. Bagnall:** Mr. Minister, is there a new processing plant being built on Prince Edward Island?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. LeClair:** Not that I know of, Madam Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

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

You're the minister of fisheries, you look after the fisheries industry, and you're telling me that you don't know where there's a fishing processing plant being built on Prince Edward Island? That you have no

knowledge, and as minister of fisheries that you don't know if this is taking place?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. LeClair:** Madam Speaker, I didn't see any new plants up yet.

I'm not sure what you're been seeing or hearing.

**Mr. MacKinley:** He's looking at the old ones that are closed down.

**Mr. LeClair:** There are areas all across Prince Edward Island where people are discussing - they'd like to process, they're wondering about the aspects of processing, how they get into processing, if it's viable. They're in our office all the time. If you want to be more specific, maybe be more specific, and maybe I can answer your question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**Mr. Bagnall:** Madam Speaker, that's fine. I'll allow the minister to go back and do some work in his department to find out what's actually going on with the fishing industry here in the province. Obviously he doesn't know.

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

**Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mr. Bagnall:** Maybe I'll have to do up another five-point plan for him so he'll have a work agenda for next year.

### **Kings County Memorial Hospital ER**

My next question is to the minister of health. Minister, we talked here last spring. You told me that we were closing down the emergency room at the Montague hospital. You gave me your word that this was a temporary closing and that we would be opening up the Kings county ER room because it was part of your health agenda.

Can you tell me when you're going to open up that room? Because it's now long-term, not short-term closure?

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

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

As I've shared this comment to a lot of my Cabinet and caucus colleagues, as the minister of health at no point in time will I compromise patient safety over service in any facility in this province.

We are recruiting and have had success with hiring two combined lab techs that are in the province. We are presently facing some challenges with sick leave, maternity leave, and family illness with staff that I believe live in the member's riding. Our priority is to make sure that we sustain and we build an integrated health system based on patient safety.

I want to remind the Member from Montague-Kilmuir that Montague has been a recipient of an investment of over 500,000 for a new emergency room under our government; we've reached a full

complement of family physicians; \$100,000 in facilities at Douses Road, and we replaced the roof, which is being replaced now; so the emergency room is a priority. My mandate is to work with the clinicians, the site administrator, the physicians, the combined lab techs, to make sure that the public has access to safe emergency room service, and I'm not prepared to compromise that over politics or pressure from the Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Thank you.

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

**Speaker:** Order, please!

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

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

I have to admit that that was a pretty good speech and good answer. It's one of the few that I've actually got from the other side of the House this session, so it's good and refreshing to get an answer. But minister, is it not true that you're bowing under to the doctors, that they've met with you, and they told you they don't want it open and now you changed your mind and you're not going to open it?

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

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

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

Yes, I have had a very lengthy discussion with the full complement of physicians from Kings County Memorial Hospital. Physicians in this province are a part of the provincial health care system and they are a very part of the provincial health care system. Basically, the discussion that we had was to look at the service. They, too, have concerns around continuing services that are not safe for the clients that they serve on a day to day basis.

At this point in time there's been no decision. We are working towards staffing and working hard at staffing sources. In the health care system my mandate as the minister is to listen and talk to the key stakeholders, and physicians are very much a key part of the provincial system as we provide service and safe service for Islanders across Prince Edward Island.

I want to reiterate to all the members in this House that health care in rural Prince Edward Island is alive and well by our government. Our investments from Souris to Tignish. We've got a track record that speaks volumes, and we'll continue to provide safe service and accessible service to Islanders, Madam Speaker.

Thank you very much.

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

**Speaker:** Order, please!

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, final question.

**Mr. Bagnall:** Madam Speaker, thank you very much for that answer, Mr. Minister.

Minister, you promised that you were going to open the ER in Montague. You told me that it was part of your long-term health strategy to keep the ER in Montague open. You told me also that Souris was closed and that it was a commitment that the ER in Montague would remain open for both the Souris and the Montague hospital. Have you changed your mind, are you still going to open the ER in Montague?

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

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

I just want to remind the Member from Montague-Kilmuir, it was their government that closed the emergency room in Souris.

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

**Mr. D. Currie:** Madam Speaker, we basically, in respect to an update for the member, we have worked hard and we have recruited two combined technicians that have been recruited.

This means that three out of our five are resourced to work alone. Training for lab procedures is now underway, and two radiation technicians - one person will be ready to work independently by mid-November and the second person should be ready by early January 2010, bringing us to a full complement.

I am not prepared as the minister of health for the Province of Prince Edward Island to implement a service until we're at capacity to provide safe public health care to

Islanders, Madam Speaker.

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

[End of Question Period]