



Session:	3/63
Date:	24 November 2009
No:	6

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

TUESDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2009

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

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

PNP non-disclosure form for staff (further)

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

On Friday the Leader of the Opposition asked some questions around a non-disclosure statement which she believed was signed by some staff at IIDI or PEI Business Development Inc.

I just wanted to clarify, I believe what she's speaking of is the Code of Conduct, and today I'll be tabling that Code of Conduct. I just want to inform the Leader of the Opposition and everyone here in the House that every employee of the Crown corporations and agencies of the department are required to sign this, including casual, contract, and permanent employees. Every time an employment contract is signed or renewed, the Code of Conduct is signed. The Code of Conduct states that employees are not to disclose any confidential information they may become aware of or through their employment, and that extends beyond the termination of employment.

The first Code of Conduct we have recorded was adopted on May 4, 1987 for the PEI Development Agency. It has been revised and updated over the years.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

FoodTrust

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you.

He answered her questions so she didn't have to ask them. My first question today is for the Minister of Agriculture. Minister, in the spring session of the House I asked you to bring back or give me the figures for the final price for of the taxpayers-owned Food Trust, and you said you would bring that back. I have not received it. Are you willing to give that information to the House today?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

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

I will check with department staff, and if we can get those figures we'll be pleased to bring them back.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, to the Minister of Agriculture.

That was the exact same answer we got last

time we asked the question, that you would check and bring it back and let us know. It's six months later, we haven't got any response back, we haven't got any answers, and you're still telling us the same thing.

Can you tell me how much you wrote off for Food rust before you sold it to Mid-Isle Farms?

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

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

Again, I will check with staff and try and gather those figures. I'll also check and see what figures can be disclosed, and I'll certainly be pleased to bring those back.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Yes, Madam speaker, this is all taxpayers' money, and he should know that because it was already in the book showing what the write-off was, it was \$1.2 million.

Also, I asked the Provincial Treasurer the same thing, and he promised to bring it back and get me the information and he still hasn't got any information to me on it. So, once again, I'm going to ask the Minister of Agriculture: Do you know what the write-offs are? What the actual write-offs were for FoodTrust? That's your department. You're the minister responsible. You were the minister responsible when the sale took

place. Or are you going to pass the buck and get somebody to answer it for you?

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

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

I understand that the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir is - well, it's almost ironic that he seems certainly to have developed a concern for the taxpayers of this province. I want to reassure the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir that those are the same taxpayers that his administration cost over \$50 million to Polar Foods -

Speaker: Thank you, minister.

Mr. Campbell: - a significant amount more with NOFG.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, I know this minister has a real habit of going back and talking about something that happened 10 years ago.

He's been living in the past instead of moving on to (Indistinct).

Minister, my understand is that you sold FoodTrust for \$1. Is that correct?

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

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

Certainly that's not correct.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Campbell: Then obviously he knows the file. Mr. Minister, how much was it sold for?

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

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

What's really unfortunate here is that the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, who was agriculture minister for a period of time, allowed like a lot of other things, FoodTrust to erode to a situation that difficult decisions had to be made. It's a pleasure to be a part of a government that's not afraid of making difficult decisions instead of sweeping things under the rug and costing the taxpayers of this province more, and more, and more money.

I will check on the selling price and be pleased to report back to the House.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Question to the Minister of Agriculture. Minister, you were president of the company that bought FoodTrust. Are you still the president?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

As the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir should know, if there are any ties whatsoever between a company and a decision-making where one of the members of Cabinet is associated with, that member excuses themselves from Cabinet.

So the Minister of Agriculture really has limited knowledge, if any, with regards to the sale of FoodTrust. He excused himself, the same as when salaries for positions come up, I automatically have to excuse myself from those discussions. So, the Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning dealt with the majority of those issues, and I'll ask that minister to take questions.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: I guess I'll go back to the minister. I'm sure he knows whether he's president of the company or he's not president of the company. Are you still president of FoodTrust?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Madam Speaker, obviously

the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir knows that when someone enters Cabinet any of their assets have to be placed in blind trust, so no member would have any knowledge of any of those issues.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: A lame excuse. The same as, trying to sweep it under the table, Madam Speaker.

Is your brother still a director of Food Trust, Mr. Minister of Agriculture?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Again, all that would be under trust, and regardless of who's related to who, that doesn't matter. The Minister of Agriculture excused himself from all those meetings and had no ties whatsoever to any of the decision making in that process.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: I didn't realize the minister's brother was under a blind trust. So, I guess that's another way to try to hide.

Minister, you wrote off all the liabilities and turned around and sold the company to you and your brother. Do you not feel that that

was in a conflict of interest?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Obviously, Madam Speaker, the Member from Montague-Kilmuir is making stuff up again.

All of the minister's assets are put in a blind trust. You can check the records. The minister excused himself from all those meetings and all the decision-making processes. It's very unfortunate that we have the Member from Montague-Kilmuir who was in Cabinet, who knows all the guidelines, who knows how decisions are made, that would want to slander someone.

I was involved in the decision-making process. There was a tender process put out and the best tender won.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, I'm sure the best tender won when they wrote off \$1.2 million and then allowed the minister and his brother to buy the company when he was a minister.

I think that, yeah, they probably had the best tender.

Mr. Sheridan: (Indistinct) a minister at the time.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, they said it was a fair bidding process, but how can it be a fair bidding process when the minister was

the president of the company, the minister had all the inside information on what was taking place, the minister wrote off \$1.2 million for FoodTrust, and then he turns around and has the best offer?

How can that be a fair process, minister?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Again, it's unfortunate that the Member from Montague-Kilmuir chooses to slander one of his colleagues here in the Legislature. He should know full well that with regards to guidelines around conflict, when people excuse themselves they cannot be in conflict. He was involved in Cabinet, I believe for a three-year period. He should know what the guidelines are.

First of all, let's correct some of his facts. In fact, the Minister of Agriculture was not Minister of Agriculture at the time. He excused himself from all of those meetings, and there was a tender process put out, and Cabinet accepted the best tender.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I wonder if he excused himself when they got PNP units. I mean, the FoodTrust company got PNP units while the minister was in as a minister. How can he justify using that advantage to get them moved up the list so they could get PNP units?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Again, Madam Speaker, no ministers would be involved in any of the decision-making processes.

I'm not sure what he was talking about with regards to PNP, because he should know - he was in Cabinet before when the PNP program was run for a number of years - and he knows that's not a Cabinet decision.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: No Madam Speaker, but I think that if the minister was going to be up-front he would have advised his Cabinet that he is the minister of (Indistinct) minister.

It goes back to the Minister of Agriculture again. Minister, did you ask Andrew Campbell, who looks after your blind trust, if they did apply for PNP units at - because I think you'd want to know after it came up in the House. Can you tell us: Did you talk to your blind trust man on this issue?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Again, Madam Speaker, that would be illegal for one of the members to start looking around with what's happening in their blind trust.

The reason to have a blind trust is that you do not know what's taking part. I encourage the Member from Montague-Kilmuir, if he has accusations to make, that's why we have the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. I

challenge him to make an accusation.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Yeah, we've seen what happens there.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, to the Minister of Agriculture again.

Can you tell me what Chen Bin is now doing with your company?

An Hon. Member: Who's that?

Mr. Bagnall: What position?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Mr. Bagnall: What active position he has taken on with your company?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

As the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir knows, all those assets would be put in blind trust. The minister would have no knowledge whatsoever.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: I'm wondering if the minister can tell me what Chen Dehua's position with the company now is that he is part of the directors of the company? What is his

position with the company now?

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

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

It appears that the Member from Montague-Kilmuir doesn't have a lot of confidence in the abilities of the conflict commissioner.

Of course, we know that the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters is fully confident in the conflict commissioner. He brought a couple of complaints forward with respect to the minister of transportation, and those proved to be unfounded, but he did bring them. I guess, Madam Speaker -

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Campbell: I guess it's clear - yes, and congratulations on that for sure, Madam Speaker.

We know the confidence level that the Leader of the Opposition has in the conflict commissioner. She made that quite clear here last week. By the last comment made by the Member from Montague-Kilmuir, it appears he doesn't have any either.

I just want to reassure him that the conflict commissioner is a very professional, well-educated and dedicated person. If the Member from Montague-Kilmuir has any questions, I urge him to bring them to the conflict commissioner.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the same Minister of Agriculture. Minister, you never answered what the last two directors are doing with your company, so maybe you can tell me what He Xiaobo is doing with your company. He's another one of those investment immigrants. What's his active part with your company?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Again, the Leader of the Opposition knows that when you become a minister of the Crown, a member of Executive Council who sits around the Cabinet table, any of your assets that could have anything to do with government have to be placed in blind trust.

Therefore, any member of Executive Council has their assets placed in blind trust. In fact, if they knew any of the questions that the Member from Montague-Kilmuir was asking, then they would be in breach of this House.

So I encourage the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir to please do a little bit of research and get up to speed on his facts.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, my facts are all right here and I have them all right in front of me.

Minister, can you tell me what the fourth immigrant's position with your company is? Hong Dianjun. What's his position with your company now as an immigrant investor? What is his active part in your company? What does he do now for your company?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Again, Madam Speaker, the Member from Montague-Kilmuir knows full well that any assets are placed in blind trust, but I believe the hon. Minister of Agriculture already indicated, prior to being elected six years ago, that Mid Isle did apply for PNP units and did receive them under the former administration.

So perhaps he should turn around and ask the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters those questions.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Yes, they received units in August 2008, so it was under your administration, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Minister, how can you stand in this House and justify that you had a fair and equitable way to dispose of FoodTrust when you allowed the company a \$1.2 million write-off - you allowed you, and your brother, and a few friends to buy this company, then you (Indistinct) PNP units when you were in, minister, for this

company, and you say it's fair and open to all Islanders?

Minister, how can you justify standing up in this House and telling us that it was fair, fair to every other business?

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

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

With respect to FoodTrust, there was an interdepartmental group of deputies who met and designed an RFP process which was issued publicly. I believe there were two bids with respect to FoodTrust and, as the Premier clearly indicated, the best bid won.

Going back to the hon. Minister of Agriculture, again, his assets are in a blind trust, and again, I would encourage - not only ask, but encourage - the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir if he has concerns around conflict, to please raise them with the conflict commissioner.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Question back to the minister again.

Minister, can you tell me: Did the other companies know that you were writing off \$1.2 million before they did their proposal? Did they know that you would be able to get

four PNP units to go along with it, minister?

You said that they all had a fair and - did they know these facts? Were they in the proposal?

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

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

The Member from Montague-Kilmuir, who was a Cabinet minister for three years, should be well aware that what was included in an RFP process would be made available to anyone who had an interest in bidding.

Both parties who bid were privy to the same RFP. It was a fair and open process and, again, the best bid won.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Minister, will you table that RFP?

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

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

I'll check with department staff, and if we can table that RFP I'd be pleased to bring it back.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: It seems, Madam Speaker, the minister's over there - and I don't know which one to address any more because everyone jumps up every time I ask a question.

It seems that they talk about open and fairness and everybody has the same opportunities, but they can't seem to table any information or get back to the information when it's requested.

What are they trying to hide? What are you trying to hide that you won't bring forward the price for FoodTrust? What are you trying to hide when you won't make public in the House how much you wrote off for FoodTrust? What are you trying to hide when you won't deliver the documentation of the business agreement for the purchase? What are you hiding?

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

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

I'm not hiding anything. The Member from Montague-Kilmuir asked about the RFP and I said I would check the staff and bring it back.

He talks about fairness and transparency. That's the whole rationale behind a request for proposal process. That's what was put together with respect to FoodTrust. That's the process that we went through.

Again, there was an interdepartmental deputies group who administered that process. I'll check for the RFP and if I can, I'll be pleased to bring it back.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Minister, can you tell me why you used your preferential power to get PNP units for that company? There were 600 people turned down in July, sent out letters that there was no more money and that they were not going to be able to get any more units, yet, when you go to buy this company in August, you get four units. How can you justify that to all the other businesses across PEI that you got special treatment?

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

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

It's unfortunate that we see the recurring pattern here in the House. Now, we have the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir attacking the character of a Cabinet minister in this government. I can assure you that this Cabinet minister, the same as any other Cabinet minister in this government - and I'm assuming in the previous government - went through the Conflict of Interest Commissioner with respect to any assets. Those would be placed in a blind trust. There was no advantage given to this minister or any other in this province.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, it seems kind of funny that there's no preferential treatment given to this minister.

Comes down, he's a president of the company, or ex-president of the company - he's hiding behind his trust fund, so he's not going to admit to that - his brother is a director, the company gets a 1.2 million write-off, they won't tell what they sold the company for, they're hiding that information.

To say that nobody's getting any preferential treatment? Minister, how do you expect the public to believe that? How do you expect anyone to believe that?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: With the truth, Madam Speaker, and the truth of the matter is, with regards to all members of Cabinet, they place all of their interests into blind trusts.

They also dismiss themselves from any issues that could put them in any type of conflict whatsoever. Finally, with regards to the sale of FoodTrust, it was all tendered out, and the best tender was accepted.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: According to the deputy

ministers, the two proposals were the same but they gave it to the minister because he was the minister.

Now, minister, if the FoodTrust didn't sell for a dollar, how much did it sell for? Are you going to tell us the price now? You must know the price. I mean, it's been a year. The question's been asked I don't know how many times. So what did you sell FoodTrust for?

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

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

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir is absolutely right, it was approximately a year ago. I believe the sale price was three quarters of a million dollars, but I'd ask for the patience of the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir. I would like to check with staff to verify that, but I believe it was three quarters of a million dollars.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: I guess you have to ask the question 10 times, Madam Speaker, before they'll finally start to answer it.

He knew the figure all the time and wouldn't deliver it. What is he trying to hide by not coming forth with the figures? Why is he trying to keep it in the dark?

Mr. Sheridan: We don't work (Indistinct).

Mr. Bagnall: Why is he trying - I know the Provincial Treasurer hides on everything and ducks and turns and hides on every issue, but I didn't think I would get that from the other ministers.

I'm asking the minister: Why don't you come forward? How much was the write-off now? Obviously you know because you knew the other figures.

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

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

Again, I have committed to the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, and again, I believe that the sales figure was three quarters of a million dollars. With respect to the write-off, I'd have to go back to see what kind of a figure it was. I guess in large part it depends on how big of a mess that was left behind by the former Minister of Agriculture.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Bagnall: Actually Madam Speaker, it was a great company, it was actually getting to start to make profit -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bagnall: - and that's why they were trying to sell it. That's why they tried to get rid of it. They were doing -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bagnall: They were doing \$3 million in

volume. They were starting to make money, and then - so what's he do, he writes off all the debt, Madam Speaker, the debt - you know, there was debt there.

Speaker: Do you have a question, hon. member?

Mr. Bagnall: Yeah, I'm getting to that.

Madam Speaker, there were coolers that were purchased that they still owed for.

Yes, and that was part of the debt, but that was an ongoing thing.

Some Hon. Members: Question!

Mr. Bagnall: Why would you write off the \$1.2 million for the minister's benefit? Why would you do that?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I'm very proud of our government. When we came into power we actually continued on with a process that was started by the previous government, and that was to look at the sale of FoodTrust. We were very fortunate that we were able to put out an RFP and that we were able to get a couple of bids, and we accepted the best bid for the sale of Food Trust, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Back to the minister. The minister made a comment before that they

had a review committee of deputy ministers set up to review the proposal. Minister, who were those - was Brooke MacMillan one of those ministers?

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

Mr. Bagnall: Deputy ministers?

Mr. Campbell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and yes, I believe he was.

Mr. Bagnall: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: I guess that's why we know he got PNP units now, then. So he's looking his friends again. Madam Speaker, this deal never stops to get worse and worse and worse.

We have a minister of the Crown who belongs to the company that gets preferential treatment so he can get four units. Then he has the guy who's changed all the rules in the PNP to be on the review board to say whether he's doing it right.

Mr. Sheridan: Could we have a question?

Mr. Bagnall: I can understand why the Provincial Treasurer gets awful upset. He's been ducking and hiding on all these figures for years.

Mr. Sheridan: Could we have a question, Madam Speaker.?

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, I've got to go back, he broke my train of thought, so I'll have to start again here.

With all of this going on, Brooke MacMillan, who broke every rule in the books on PNP, and he's on the review committee that looks after the purchase -

Speaker: Do you have a question, hon. member?

Mr. Bagnall: Did he tell you, minister, that you could get these four units? You could make this deal and get the four units and then you'll have an advantage over everybody else?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I find it unfortunate that the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir - actually, I don't find it - I find it unfortunate, but not surprising, that he enjoys getting up in this House and bashing a lot of good bureaucrats, and bashing a lot of good Islanders.

Upon the previous government's decision to sell FoodTrust, a transitional board was put in place, was established by Executive Council to oversee the sale process. I just want to point out the people here that really the Member from Montague-Kilmuir is basically saying are in cahoots, are doing things inappropriately, and that the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir is slandering. I expect it from the Leader of the Opposition, but not from the Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Those people are: Brian Douglas, deputy minister, a career bureaucrat; Richard

Gallant, deputy minister, career bureaucrat; Bruce MacNaughton, old FoodTrust board member; and Raymond Loo, old FoodTrust board member.

Obviously the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir has no respect for Brian Douglas, Richard Gallant, Bruce MacNaughton, or Raymond Loo either, and I think it's quite unfortunate that that member chooses to slander respectable Islanders in this Legislative Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Dispensing fees for prescription drugs

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

My question is for the Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors, and it has to do with regards to dispensing fees for prescription drugs.

I was approached by some seniors and those on a fixed income with concern that every 30 days they're obliged to pay for a dispensing fee for their prescription drug, and they're wondering why can't they - and I'll ask the question on their behalf - why can't they get a 90 prescription, thus saving themselves two of these dispensing fees?

Some Hon. Members: Good question.

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

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

That is a good question. That's a question that all of the MLAs in the House could ask regularly.

First of all, we have as a government been paying attention to the province formulary and made some substantial investments, whether it be through the diabetic strip program, or whether it's the additional 2.2 million we invested in high cost cancer drugs last spring.

The challenge we have, with the *Pharmacy Act* last year, we took some pressure off. Through the act we tabled last spring we allowed a one-time fill up for a 30-day prescription and a 90-day prescription by the pharmacist, which don't have to go back to the physician for renewal. So we are making inroads.

To get pointed to the question, there are some concerns right now with the type of medications that are distributed. There is a professional clinical assessment by pharmacists and physicians that needs to take place. They have that responsibility and liability.

The agreement between the pharmacy association and my Department of Social Services and Seniors opens next spring, but we will commit to looking at possibilities of a volume of drugs that could be expanded to the formulary which would take pressure off that cost of dispensing fees to seniors in the province.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Tidal flow at Oyster Bed

Mr. Vessey: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question today is to the hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works. This past summer his department cleaned a lot of debris up underneath the bridge at Oyster Bed left from previous construction, after a lot of lobbying from local residents and the local watershed group. I applaud the minister for that.

My question is: Has there been any follow ups to see if it's changed the tidal flow after the debris was cleaned up?

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

Mr. MacKinley: Thank you very much.

Yes, we're trying to do the same thing out in Tracadie right now. I believe J.P. Trucking has got the contract out there.

An Hon. Member: Corran Ban.

Mr. MacKinley: Or Corran Ban, is it? I was at the bridge the other day. Anyway, we're getting it done. That side over there had 10 years and they did nothing.

But anyway, the residents, along with yourself, lobbied and the Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour, fought hard to get that form of cement and

that (Indistinct) taken out of there, and also, there had to be some dredging.

So answering your question is, it's improving but it's going to take quite awhile. You just can't clean up a mess that was left by the previous government all them years.

Speaker: Thank you, minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

FoodTrust (further)

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I didn't get any answer from the minister as to where the four immigrants that now belong to the directors who are the immigrant investors on the PNP, what they're doing in the company right now. I guess I'll ask the question again. Does the minister know what these members are actually doing working with the FoodTrust now with the PNP units that you've got in 2008, in August, actually? I'll table this where it shows the company and the PNP, where the PNP immigrants - in Tabling of Documents. What are these people doing?

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

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

I question as to how the Member from Montague-Kilmuir would know whether

these are even immigrants. They could possibly be listed as directors of a company. It doesn't mean they came through a PNP. They could be lots of possibilities here.

I just want to clarify something. The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir spoke about the Minister of Agriculture using his authority to influence decision-making on PNP. I just want to remind the Member from Montague-Kilmuir that in 2002 the gentleman behind him, the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, brought forward an EC memo that any decision-making with respect to the Provincial Nominee Program did not need Cabinet approval. It was to be handled within the department.

I question as to how this minister or this minister or any other minister would have any influence with respect to a PNP.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Funding for Cavendish Farms

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

A question for the Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning. I've seen that you wrote a cheque out for 600,00 for Cavendish Farms. As I read it, I believe that's just for this week. I understand that they're going to shut down maybe next month for another week or so. Will you be requiring additional

funding for that shutdown also?

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

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

Yes, we have issued a cheque to Cavendish Farms in the amount of \$632,000. This is a training allowance for a two-week period. With respect to what may happen in future shutdowns, as PEI's largest private sector employer we are in discussions with Cavendish Farms ongoing year-round with lots of different issues. Very pleased to be able to offer this. I think we've gotten an indication - and I want to just make sure that everyone is aware that this money is going directly to the employees of Cavendish Farms.

I have a statement here from Ron Arsenault who's union representative of Local 864 of the UFCW. I quote:

On behalf of the 550 members of the UFCW who work at Cavendish Farms, we thank the Province of Prince Edward Island for their support of Island workers as we deal with the challenges of the current economic downturn. Our employer is working hard to avoid permanent job losses. The proposed downtime in 2010, should current economics not improve, is challenging for our members, but is a whole lot better than losing a job. The Province of Prince Edward Island is demonstrating its commitment to Island workers and their families through the training funding it will provide. We appreciate their investment in securing our futures through this training funding. One

hundred per cent of this investment goes to the workers at Cavendish Farms.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

A question for the Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning. So if the 600,000 is for the remaining shutdowns for this year, have you allocated any further funding for the upcoming year for Cavendish Farms?

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

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

As I indicated, the 632,000 is for a two-week period. We will continue our discussions with Cavendish Farms, as we will with any company in this province. I know I've received a number of calls from companies interested in training, and that's wonderful. It's wonderful. Training at any time, regardless of the situation, is a good thing. To allow for diversity and to allow us to better compete in the marketplace and to better adapt to changing economic situations.

We're working with a number of different companies now. We're looking forward to reviewing training proposals submitted by a number of different companies in this

province, and we will continue to work with Cavendish Farms as well.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. M. Currie: So what I understand, Madam Speaker, is the minister of innovation is going to accept applications from other companies that also want to apply for training, and that it's not only for Cavendish Farms, it's for every company on Prince Edward Island.

Is that true?

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

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

We're very pleased as a government to have completed the devolution of Skills PEI from Service Canada. It provides us the opportunity to, I guess, apply some made-in-PEI solutions and deal with the economic realities of what's happening here in the province.

With respect to other companies, if other companies have an interest in retraining of their employees, I encourage them to contact staff at Skills PEI. They will be required to submit a detailed retraining proposal.

I can assure you that we do have staff this week who are on site at Cavendish Farms to

evaluate the training programs going on. This is new to the province, Skills PEI, but again, it's a wonderful opportunity to be able to help employees in this province.

Thank you.

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

McCain's

Mr. M. Currie: Minister, I believe you indicated that this funding arrangement for Cavendish Farms was because of an economic downturn. I'm just wondering: Did you receive the same proposal from McCain's processing facility in Borden?

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

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

I know that there has been discussion with staff at Skills PEI with respect to McCain's. I, myself, at this point haven't seen a formal training proposal from McCain's. But we as a government recognize the significant input and value that these two companies bring to our agriculture sector in this province. McCain's and Cavendish play a very important and a necessary role here in this province, and we're willing to sit down, discuss, and see if there are ways we can help.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, I'm glad to hear that because we did receive a lot of calls from companies that are concerned, that they also have shutdowns - when these larger companies shut down it affects them also - so I'm glad to hear that they're now eligible for all this training funding.

Outstanding loans of PEI Lending Corporation and BDI

Minister of innovation, now that you have blended the PEI Lending Corporation and BDI together, could you please inform Islanders what are the total loans outstanding for your department?

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

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

As a government we have made the decision to take the PEI lending authority and business development under the same ministry. I think it's been a very good and insightful move. With respect to the total value of loans outstanding, I will get that information from staff and be pleased to bring it back.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, another question to the minister.

Can you tell us what, or if any, amounts are outstanding? What is the accounts that are outstanding, the total amount? (Indistinct).

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

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

I will attempt to have that broken down when I bring back the total loans. What we're seeing with this government's very aggressive capital budget plan, we were the first province I believe in the country to introduce a stimulus package here. I guess if we look around it's having a significant positive impact here in the province, whether it be in Transportation and Public Works - I think we've paved more kilometres than this province has ever seen. If you take a drive down through Charlottetown downtown, we see a number of exciting projects going on. We had expansions at places like Master Packaging. New companies coming to Prince Edward Island.

We've clearly indicated that we recognize the economic situation that we're dealing with and we've taken measures that in a lot of ways are having us leading this country.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

New companies and jobs

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, I'm glad to hear the minister of innovation is pleased to announce that there are new companies that are coming to Prince Edward Island.

Could he please bring back, or maybe he can recite here today, how many new companies have come to Prince Edward Island in the last couple of years and how many jobs they created since you've come to government?

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

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

There has been a significant number, and I wouldn't be able to profess to be able to stand here and quote them all. I know yesterday I was joined by the hon. Provincial Treasurer and the hon. Minister of Agriculture in Kensington for a very exciting announcement. Nature's Crops. Not only is it a new company coming to Prince Edward Island bringing innovation and technology, but it's also a support for crop rotation in this province and improving the farm gate.

We have other companies. We have Virtual Agent, we have MDDX, Millennium Care, Aspen Camp. There's a lot of companies that have made the decision to come to this province even in these difficult economic times. We have more announcements coming up, one at the end of this week, actually, about another new company coming to PEI, in rural PEI. I'm not sure whether it's in the hon. Member from

Montague-Kilmuir's district or the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters. It's pretty close to the border there, I think.

Anyway, there are a number of companies who have come to PEI, a number who have expanded. We have job growth in this province and we're very proud to be out there supporting Islanders.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Unightly property on Winsloe Road

Mr. M. Currie: Okay, Madam Speaker.

I'll shift to the minister of environment. I understand that under the *Unightly Properties Act* that there is a dwelling on the Winsloe Road that some people have been in contact with your department for a period of time. I think it's 1052, the civic number. Could you please see - I believe the Royal Bank owns it, and they're certainly not doing their part to look after this property. It's in poor repair and it's affecting other people's property.

Could you please use the strong arm of the ministry to make the Royal Bank clean up this property? Of course you will.

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

Mr. Brown: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I thank the member for that question. We are going to - and it's a great time to announce this. We are going to take an aggressive approach from now on with unsightly properties within the Province of Prince Edward Island. We think it's wrong for people to leave their buildings and to leave their properties dilapidated and let their neighbours have to put up with this unsightly stuff. When I was with the City of Charlottetown we took an aggressive approach in this area. I've asked my staff, along with the provincial staff, the property tax staff, to look into this issue and to say: Look, we have an unsightly property, we're going to fix it up.

We're not going to wait and we're not going to adjudicate and send letters back and forth to heirs and possible heirs of these properties. We're going to clean it up and we're going to charge the property for the clean up. When that property is put up for tax sale that's when we'll get our money back for the clean up of those properties.

So I want to warn everybody there is going to be an aggressive approach over the next couple of years on cleaning up these properties throughout the Province of Prince Edward Island because I think it's wrong.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[End of Question Period]