



Session:	3/63
Date:	26 November 2009
No:	8

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD  
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

THURSDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2009

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

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

**Energy tender and negotiations**

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

My first question today is for the Premier. Premier, a little over a year ago there was a tender put out by New Brunswick Power for 300 megawatts of extra transmission capacity for export into the United States, and I'm wondering why you and your government did not tender on that tender.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and that's a very good question.

In fact, it's my knowledge that it would be a very good idea to be able to tender on that. It's 300 megawatts, I believe, of electricity with a direct line into the United States. I believe, and the hon. member can correct me if I'm wrong, that Hydro-Québec, in fact, did win that bid.

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

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** I find it ironic that I'm going to be correcting the Premier, but it's a 15-year bid, and yes, and Quebec was the

only one that bid on it, so you didn't even bid on it.

So I'm just wondering why you allowed such an opportunity like that to pass the province when you were formulating a windmill project for a billion dollars, you said, at the very same time. So I'm just wondering why you allowed that opportunity to pass.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I think the hon. member's right. I think the government perhaps should have looked at that. I'm not exactly sure why they didn't, but I think it's probably a good opportunity, for perhaps the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters to go take a look at that RFP, because it's my understanding that that RFP was put out before our government even came to power.

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

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

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** No, Madam Speaker, the Premier is wrong again.

It was in December 2007, so I think he was in power at that time. I think the Premier lost an opportunity and allowed Hydro-Québec to gain a monopoly on all the power that's going to be transmitted into Quebec.

Premier, could you tell me who the lawyer is that's representing Prince Edward Island in your negotiations with Hydro-Québec?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Gordon MacKay.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Premier, is that the same lawyer who intervened on behalf of Islanders for the rate increase that happened in the last year or so with Maritime Electric?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** I believe so, yes.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** That should make Islanders all warm and fuzzy. We just saw rates go up 42%.

Madam Speaker, could the Premier please tell me who else is on your negotiation team in your dealings with Hydro-Québec?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

We have Mr. Marshall, who is an expert with regards to electricity transmission, that's aiding in that, plus officials from my

office.

I'm glad that the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters is asking these questions today because we know that back in the early 2000s Prince Edward Island lost a tremendous opportunity when the government at the time lifted the New Brunswick plus 10% rule -

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

**Premier Ghiz:** I believe at the time, Madam Speaker, a press release was put out, when the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters was minister, that said that lifting the New Brunswick plus 10 that electricity rates in this province would in fact be going down. We all know that that did not happen, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** No, Madam Speaker, the Premier allowed those rates to rise (Indistinct) 43%.

Premier, is Maritime Electric playing an active role in the negotiations with Hydro-Québec?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** No.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Premier, I find it curious

that Maritime Electric is not involved, because they are the sole provider and distributor of electricity in this province and they are governed by the *Electric Power Act*. So is there any reason why they're not at the table?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

It's interesting that the former minister, who was in charge of energy in this province for quite a while, the member who was the minister when Prince Edward Island got rid of New Brunswick plus 10, the member who was the minister when Meteor Creek was going to save everybody in Prince Edward Island -

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct).

**Premier Ghiz:** - and lower electricity rates were going to happen, the minister who was in place when we were going to be getting natural gas from Deep Panuke - and we're still waiting or that natural gas from Deep Panuke.

What we're doing, as a government, is we're sitting down now with Hydro-Québec, looking for anyone else, and we're trying to purchase cheaper renewable energy for Islanders. For too long - and I'm not going to get Islanders' hopes up, we're just exploring. We don't know what's going to happen, we hope that we'll be able to find something. But I think for too long previous governments, especially that member over there, held out false hope for Islanders.

We're not going to do that. We're going to continue to work to find cheaper renewable energy sources for Islanders.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, a question for the Premier.

Premier, is the reason why Maritime Electric is not at the table is because you are negotiating to buy Maritime Electric so you can turn around and give it Hydro-Québec and then allow them to have a complete monopoly on not only New Brunswick but also Prince Edward Island?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** No.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, I find that a little ironic that Maritime Electric is not allowed to be at these negotiations.

Premier, you're going to commit here again today that Maritime Electric is not - you're not going to purchase Maritime Electric for Hydro-Québec, is that true?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

It's ironic that you have the former minister, who's now a member, that every opportunity he gets he bashes Maritime

Electric, and then we go into negotiations with Hydro-Québec to try and buy cheaper energy in the province to fix all the mistakes that he made while he was minister. Now he's -

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) backroom (Indistinct) -

**Premier Ghiz:** - chastising the government because we don't have Maritime Electric with us.

What our government's trying to do, Madam Speaker, is we sat down with Maritime Electric before we went into negotiations with Hydro-Québec.

The only thing we're looking for is a power purchase agreement with the Province of Quebec because, as the hon. member would know, Hydro-Québec produces somewhere around 40,000 megawatts of electricity.

Prince Edward Island is in the need of about 100 megawatts of that, and our government is going to work to try and find cheap renewable energy sources for Islanders. For too long we've been misled, whether or not it's Meteor Creek, Deep Panuke, getting rid of New Brunswick plus 10.

I'm not going to raise the expectations of Islanders like the previous government did. What we're going to do is be honest with Islanders and say: We know we have the highest electricity in the country and we're going to work hard to reduce that down.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from

Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, a question for the Premier.

The minister of energy in this province is appointed by Executive Council to look after the *Electric Power Act*. Why is he not at the table with these negotiations?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Obviously he is, Madam Speaker, the same as I am.

Myself, I have officials from my office taking part. The minister of energy has officials from his office taking part in these negotiations.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, a question for the Premier.

In a lot of your comments in the last couple of weeks you have mentioned that you're in negotiations with Hydro-Québec to provide cable for 100 megawatts of power to the Magdalen Islands. Can you tell me: Is that part of your negotiations?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

What I did say, again - I hate to correct the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters - but what I did say, and I did say this publicly, because we are in negotiations -

we can't tip our hand on exactly what we're negotiating with - but I was asked what the advantages for Hydro-Québec to be looking to sell renewable energy here to Prince Edward Island.

The fact of the matter is that we are close to Îles de la Madeleine, which is part of the Province of Quebec. At some point they may be looking at finding a way to get their renewable energy over to Îles de la Madeleine, which puts us at a very strategic advantage.

Any opportunity that I have to go out and try and find cheaper renewable energy for Islanders, I'm going to go out and look for every possible opportunity.

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

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, the Premier - are you indicating that you're going to run a cable from New Brunswick, 100 megawatt cable, across the bridge, across PEI, over Rustico, out over to the Magdalen Islands, 200 kilometres, at 2 million dollars a kilometre?

It's going to cost around 400 million dollars. You're negotiating that with Hydro-Québec?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** No.

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, I find it difficult that the Premier has indicated that you were talking about 100-megawatt cable and transmission for electricity over the Magdalen Islands.

So you're saying you're not doing that now?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Again, what I said, Madam Speaker, is there is a strategic advantage for the Province of Quebec to try and provide the Îles de la Madeleine with renewable energy.

It would be up to Hydro-Québec if they wanted to build a cable over to Îles de la Madeleine. Îles de la Madeleine does not use that much in terms of electricity. I think it could be somewhere between 20 and 50 megawatts.

If we had the opportunity here on Prince Edward Island where right now we only have about 20% of our electricity coming from renewable resources, another 20% coming from nuclear over at Point Lepreau, which is currently down, and the other 60% coming from heavy oil, it's time in this province that we had a government that started looking for better options instead of coming out with pipe dreams like Deep Panuke and Meteor Creek.

We're looking for concrete ways to, one, reduce down electricity costs for Islanders, but also reduce down our carbon footprint in this province because we're very concerned about global warming and the environment. That's exactly what we're trying to do by having talks with the Province of Quebec.

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

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

**Mr. M. Currie:** Madam Speaker, a question for the Premier.

This time last year you had a lot of fanfare, and the media took it all in, that you were going to do a billion dollar project for windmill development in this province and you were going to export it in to the United States. You've since cancelled that and I think the main reason was you didn't have the capacity on the New Brunswick transmission lines to get it in to the United States.

Are you going to re-announce that plan if you do a deal with Hydro-Québec?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

It's a shame that - things have changed probably since the hon. member was a minister involved. We are still going ahead with our proposal for 500 megawatts. In fact, we have some RFPs out right now. What we're trying to do is the majority of the electricity that we buy here on Prince Edward Island - where we are a North American leader at 18% of our electricity comes right from wind development here on Prince Edward Island - we're hoping to raise that up to 30%. A lot of that will be done through the public sector.

The private sector is continuing to produce

upwards of 100 megawatts here in the province, and it's up to them to buy the wheeling rights through to the US. As the hon. member might not know, there is now an organization called FERC that goes out and regulates that. Anyone has the opportunity to bid on that, and I believe that that's what our private developers are doing, the same as any other jurisdiction in the world does, Madam Speaker.

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

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

#### **Timing of press conference**

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

Today government is going to be bringing down a very important report on health. My question is to the Premier. Government invited all three opposition members to attend your press conference at 3:15 p.m. today. Was it your intention to get all of opposition out of the House?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Not at all, Madam Speaker.

As the hon. member knows, I think she was only a member in this House for a short time when she was on the government side. A lot of the briefings take place while the House is in session. Of course, we invite all members. All our members are invited as well and we make sure that enough people come in. I know that when myself and the hon. Minister of Communities, Cultural

Affairs and Labour, the hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works, if there was an announcement in, we'd make sure that two stayed behind and another one got to go out and follow the press conference.

I'm not exactly sure why the Leader of the Opposition is nitpicking this area. She'll have an opportunity I believe on Tuesday to receive a briefing, the same as when we were in opposition we would get briefings every so often from the government side as well, Madam Speaker.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, back to the Premier.

The Premier knows full well this is opposition time. Why, we have the gallery full with people, very important people from Alzheimer's Society of Prince Edward Island that are here to discuss this afternoon, on opposition time, some of our House business.

Are you telling these people that their issue is not important? Why would you arrange a press conference on our time if the issue is so important - health - we should be there? Why would you do that?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Not at all, Madam Speaker.

This is standard practice. In fact, it was the same as when we were in opposition. No one's doing anything untoward here, and we're looking forward to the motion that the

hon. Leader of the Opposition will be bringing forward, I believe on Alzheimer's in our province.

We also had the opportunity when we were in opposition - there are things that happen all the time when we're in the Legislature. When we were in the opposition it was no different. We didn't complain about it. We made sure that we balanced our schedules, or that perhaps we sent staff. I know that the Leader of the Opposition has a lot of staff working for her in the opposition office and there's no reason why she couldn't ask someone to cover off. We are looking forward to debating her very important motion later on.

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

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

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

I'd like to remind the Premier I happen to be the health critic. It's interesting that government has the courtesy to give the media at 1:00 p.m. today a copy of this great report and I'm getting the briefing on Monday. Thank heavens for the minister of health.

But my question to you, to the Premier again: Why would you host on government time, why wouldn't you do this press conference tomorrow? You got elected, I thought, for a time for a change, but you keep reverting back to old politics. It seems that it's this side's doing things differently. Why would you host a conference, a very

important one, on health, the future of health, on our time this afternoon? Why would you do that, Premier?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

It's interesting that the Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about change in this province. That's exactly what we've done since we've come to power. Whether or not it's been reducing down gas taxes by 4.4 cents a litre, freezing property assessments in this province for a three-year period, offering an office of recruitment and retention, introducing a Family Medicine Residency Program, introducing Accelerating Nursing Program, a cancer patient navigator, colorectal cancer screening program, mammography screening program, Tyne Valley Health Centre, Palliative Home Care Drug Program. That's exactly what we are doing on this side of the House is offering positive changes to this province.

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

**Premier Ghiz:** Madam Speaker, it's unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition is having trouble juggling her schedule, but for her benefit, nothing untoward is done.

She'll have the opportunity to have someone at that press conference - if it's not her, someone else - the same as we did when we were in opposition. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition should just ask her colleagues to help out a little bit.

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

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

We'll get back to that later. It seems that the Premier is quite interested in spin doctoring. This is a very important document, it's a very important issue, Health PEI.

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

**Speaker:** Order, please!

**Leader of the Opposition:** In addition to that, the whole system of health, if you remember last year with Corpus Sanchez, you did the same thing and people are getting kind of tired of that. But we'll go now to the health minister.

#### **Criteria for funding NGOs**

Madam Speaker, the Auditor General of the province just completed a value for money audit on the province's NGOs. Would you please tell us what the criteria is for funding? To the social services minister.

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

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

Two and a half years ago coming into government, as the minister, I met with my senior officials and asked for a very transparent discussion on NGO funding. The work that was done by the Auditor General, I can't recall all the specifics, but I will

bring that information forward.

We support the work and value the work of the Auditor General in this province. Any time you're dealing with public money it's important that government departments take full accountability and responsibility for their resources as we support vulnerable Islanders in time of need.

I'll look forward to tabling more information on the specifics and the directions that the Department of Social Services and Seniors are moving in in support of the Auditor General Report.

**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, that report was made public in April, it's a number of months later. Just please highlight for us the criteria for funding for NGOs.

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

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

In that report of the Auditor General - and I'd confirm to all Members of the Legislative Assembly that we have tremendous respect for the work of the Auditor General and that we are following the directions and guidelines and the

perimeters around what the Auditor General's Report has asked our department to do.

As a matter of fact, that work started prior to the accountability framework and discussion as we work with our NGOs, our very important partners across the Province of Prince Edward Island. That work has started and is continuing starting. We have staff that have gone out and are looking at contracts and looking at accountability mechanisms and business plans for all NGOs across the province. We look forward to continuing building these so important partnerships and relationships with all the NGOs across the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

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

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

We're always hearing that we're going to be looking for this and looking for that. A simple question on the criteria. The general public realizes there's tier one, tier two and tier three. Please highlight the criteria for each of those tiers.

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

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

I just will remind the Leader of the

Opposition that the department of social services has done a tremendous job in working and building partnerships with our NGOs. The feedback that I get is that the relationships haven't been stronger. I'll use the investments that we've made with the Federation of Foster Families and the relationship that that was in with government prior to us taking government is now strong. We're partnering for success to provide quality services to all communities across Prince Edward Island.

We do respect that there are contractual arrangements for funding I believe in the tune of \$100,000, and contracts have to be respected. But I certainly will bring the fine details back to the Leader of the Opposition to explain the great work that we're doing in the Department of Social Services and Seniors.

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

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

To the same minister. Mr. Minister, do you consider the programs and services that are provided by Alzheimer's PEI to be important work?

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

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

As I alluded to in welcoming the guests in the gallery, I have been fortunate to have a number of discussions with the leadership,

with the Alzheimer's Society of Prince Edward Island. I recently attended their breakfast coffee break in Charlottetown and have attended all the luncheons. I have tremendous respect for their commitment as they advocate and bring awareness to the needs of Alzheimer's patients and the need for a strong strategy in the future.

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

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

It's great that the minister recognizes the importance and value of the work. I guess the next question I'd ask the same minister: By having ongoing education and information that they provide for caregivers as well as program supports for patients and their families, do their interventions actually help patients remain healthier longer and do they also help to keep people that have been diagnosed with this disease and dementia staying in long-term care facilities? Would you agree with that?

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

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

I do want to remind the Leader of the Opposition and all members of the Legislative Assembly that I was part of a wonderful announcement last February, and that's when we rolled out our aging in home strategy. That was a commitment to seniors and a strategy to provide the best quality care that we can possibly provide Islanders.

During that announcement, reiterated the commitment that we're making to the five public manors as part of our capital budget plan. Our investment, I think we added approximately 50 long-term care beds. Our investments in home care of \$1.5 million all across the Province of Prince Edward Island.

In part of our planning for manor replacement, I've had the ability and I've walked through all of the manors across this province and recognize the need for specialized specific dementia care in the new care facilities. Certainly that has been a priority in the conceptual planning as we move forward in the manor replacement program.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

### **Ombudsman office**

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

My question is for the Premier this afternoon.

As the Premier knows, Prince Edward Island is the last province in Canada not to have an office of an ombudsman. In my opinion this is a venture which should be explored. In fact, I know that my counterpart, the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, is working on a private member's bill at the present to bring this debate to the floor of the House.

My question today is for the Premier. Mr.

Premier, is there work currently underway to create an ombudsman office here on PEI?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Thank you very much for that question.

I know that I've been lobbied quite a bit by the Member from Stratford-Kinlock, and I want to thank the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot for that question.

It is something that we are exploring. Having said that, there are times when there are expenditures to make. There are some things that perhaps Prince Edward Island can't totally provide. Our government is a government that believes in investing in health care and education and making sure that we offer enough resources in our education system that our capital projects at our hospitals are underway, and this is another expenditure.

In terms of priorities, we'll take a look at this into the future and see if there'll be an opportunity to implement it, because as the hon. member mentioned, we are the only province in Canada not to have one so I guess it is something that's definitely worth exploring.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

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

There's a supplementary question to the Premier. As we move forward, both myself

and the Member from Stratford-Kinlock would like to see this done effectively. I'm just curious if there are any time frames that the Premier could indicate to the House.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier Ghiz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

That's another good question. I guess as we go through our checklist of our election promises, we're getting close to accomplishing that now. But as we know, there was a bit of a financial downturn in the world economy over the last year or so. This year will probably not be a year when there'll be a whole lot of new projects introduced. We'll be maintaining more of the status quo so this probably won't be happening this year, but we'll definitely be looking for it for the year after as a definite possibility.

I encourage the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock and the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot to continue working strenuously on this.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tracadie-Hillsborough Park.

### **Spring herring fishery**

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

My question today is for the Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Rural Development.

In August of this year the FRCC, the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council, put out their report and their recommendation is that the spring herring fishery be totally closed in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence, Area 4T. If this happens, there will be no bait available for people who fish lobster, people who fish crab and other species.

My question to the minister is: Mr. Minister, what has your department been doing to make sure that this spring herring fishery remains open?

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

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

The hon. member is right that the FRCC report had a number of measures in it including that particular measure of closing the fishery. DFO has not made any public statement towards that FRCC report but I did send a letter off to the federal minister saying that my department sees conservation measures and management measures in all our fishery as very essential.

This (Indistinct) this idea of closing our herring fishery is unacceptable and unwarranted and certainly would be a big blow to our Island fishermen.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tracadie-Hillsborough Park.

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

Supplementary question. Has the federal minister of fisheries responded?

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

**Mr. LeClair:** No, Madam Speaker, I haven't had a response as to what action she's going to take (Indistinct) as far as the report is concerned.

But DFO is (Indistinct) before and taken reaction to the report (Indistinct).

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

### **Respite for people with Alzheimer's**

**Leader of the Opposition:** Speaker, back to the same minister of social services and seniors.

We're having a discussion on the important work of Alzheimer's Prince Edward Island.

My question to the minister is: This organization provides day respite for people that are diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. If they didn't provide this respite service anymore, would government actually still have this service available for people?

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

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

I certainly am quite aware of the tremendous work and very familiar with the respite program.

I have constituents in my riding that benefit from the great work the Alzheimer Society does. I want to reiterate to all Members of the Legislative Assembly that our department is very committed to working closely with all NGOs across this province. The partnerships that we build are a direct result of the great services that we continue to build on and work with Islanders.

My door is always open. I know that the department has had some discussions with a provincial Alzheimer's strategy. I know that work is ongoing as part of the work we're doing with the person-centred care model that we're introducing in our new manors. So we'll continue to work closely with the Alzheimer Society and partner with them as we move forward to provide great care for all Islanders in the future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** To the same minister, just a simple question on the respite program.

If it's not available with this organization, will government take it on?

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

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

I think it's safe to say that government right

now, in the Department of Health, is leading a very progressive agenda to work towards building and sustaining a quality health care system. I, as the minister, recognize the need for quality respite and care and services for families and patients living with dementia. We'll continue to work with the Alzheimer Society to build on that relationship and I'll look at ways that we can continue to support them as we move forward.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

### **Core funding for NGO**

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

Mr. Minister, it sounds like your health would not be able to take it on because they're already too busy, and it's a valuable service this group does. It almost sounds to me like the definition for tier two funding for NGOs that this group actually provides services that are necessary.

The second part that says (Indistinct) but not absolutely essential, many people believe this organization would actually qualify for a tier one. They provide services that are considered essential. If the NGOs didn't exist, government would be required to provide the service.

You actually do not give this group any core funding. All the request is is \$30,000. You have a finance minister that's willing to provide two wine experts to the province. Will you reconsider their application for

core funding, Mr. Minister?

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

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

Certainly I do want to remind the Leader of the Opposition that the decisions not to fund NGOs in the Department of Health was a decision that was made under the former government. So, surprising to myself when I do meet with NGOs, the Alzheimer Society, it's a standard practice inside the Department of Health that they don't traditionally fund NGOs, but that's not to say that we're not willing to continue to look at options, and possibilities.

Most importantly, this is about families, this is about individuals living with Alzheimer's and dementia, and our government has demonstrated and has a strong track record of being a very compassionate government, particularly when we continue to make strong investments not only in health programs - if you look at the stroke unit, if you look at the aging in home strategy, if you look at the palliative home care drug program, if you look at the investments that we're making in the social services side with investments in drugs. Certainly we'll continue to build relationships and talk about potential opportunities into the future.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

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

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

I notice today is November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2009. You've had this report since April of this year. Again, this is about the Alzheimer Society of Prince Edward Island and their request for funding. The AG has asked you to develop criteria so that you can take a look at organizations that require funding. This group meets all the criteria. Will you be addressing that?

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

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

As I alluded to in some of the early questions, the Department of Social Services and Seniors has done some tremendous work in respect to the relationships and the NGO funding processes. As I alluded to, we have tremendous respect for the work of the Auditor General, and that work, as far as the accountability frameworks, tied into our strategic plan in the Department of Social Services and Seniors, is well underway. I look forward to bringing back to the House and the Leader of the Opposition more detailed documentation on the work done to date.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

No one's doubting that there's a lot of work that's been done, a lot of written reports, etc. Your budget for social services and seniors, if my memory serves me correct, is \$118 million bucks. My question to you is: Do you have \$30,000 for the great work that this group does? In addition to that, our aging population is increasing. We all know that the number of people being diagnosed with Alzheimer's and dementia is only going to increase. Will you commit to this group today that you're going to readdress this?

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

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

As I alluded to to the Leader of the Opposition, I am very open for more discussions. I work very closely with the guidelines and frameworks of my departments and will continue to respect the work of our senior management team. I do want to remind the Leader of the Opposition that we have tremendous pressures on both budgets to make sure that we're providing great care. That's why this announcement today, the Health PEI and looking at accountability and structures and efficiencies, that we continue to respect and manage to make sure that we have resources for all kinds of programs as we move forward as government.

So I'll welcome more discussions with the Alzheimer Society, and I value their work. As I alluded to, we're doing some very interesting work right now in looking at the level of care and our new facilities and how

we respect the needs of dementia patients into the future. So we'll look forward to more discussion, and I look forward to sitting down with the Alzheimer Society to hear their continued advocacy.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**Speaker:** Thank you.

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

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

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

Perhaps we'll move over to the Provincial Treasurer and see if we can get some help for you with your request to take some action here.

My question to the finance minister. You had no problem getting two wine experts through Treasury Board to the tune of \$80,000-plus. Wine experts for people that probably already know how to buy wine. But on the other hand, we have a whole group of people, a significant group of people, that do great work across the province. Will you help the social service minister address the need for this group to become an NGO with core funding to the tune of at least \$30,000 a year? Will you do that, finance minister?

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

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

It's a great opportunity to get up and speak to the wonderful work that this minister to my right, the health minister and the minister responsible for social services and seniors, does for us as this government. Probably the most pro-active minister that has performed inside this government or the past for the past 10 years.

The number of good things that this minister has done over the past two and a half years is uncountable here in the House today. He listed a few things that he has done over the past two and a half years, and I can only support him in anything that he comes forward with. All of the measures that have crossed our desk over the past two and a half years with the - all (Indistinct) the blessing of the Premier with regard to health and education, they are priorities in our government, and we'll continue to look at each and every one of those requests as they come forward.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** Thank you.

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

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

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

It sounds like we have the support from the Provincial Treasurer for you now, Mr. Minister. Will you actually now take a look - to the social services and seniors minister - to find this \$30,000 for this great organization, and to help them with their

request to become at least a tier two if not a tier one NGO with core funding?

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

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

We'll continue to work with the Alzheimer Society and all NGOs that come forward. If we want to continue to talk about the investments that we made in health care, we have to continue to talk about our accelerated nursing program, our palliative home care program, our family medical residency program, our new emergency department at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The province has committed to over \$60 million in capital investments in long-term care facilities. We've made substantial investments in home care of over \$1.5 million.

I think it goes without saying that this government has the best interests of Islanders and is a compassionate government and doing what's right for Islanders.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

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

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

Talk, talk, talk. Spin, spin, spin. No action. No action. Wine experts. Wine experts and

for people the great announcement last week, we now have available two wines from France. Eighty thousand bucks there. We're talking about \$30,000, and it's a very serious issue. We have more and more people across the province being diagnosed. It's time for action. Will you take action, Mr. Minister?

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

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

I want to remind the Leader of the Opposition that all NGOs that come forward are very passionate. I have tremendous respect for all NGOs, and I do speak to a lot of NGOs that are looking for funding, and certainly I will continue to respect the work of my corporate services division as we look at the structures. One thing that we have done in my two departments, I've asked them to be extremely creative, to look at how we're spending our money, to find creative ways to support all NGOs, to make sure that we meet the needs of Islanders.

Once again, I will remind the Leader of the Opposition I'll continue to work with the Alzheimer Society as we look at dealing with and supporting families with family members living with dementia, with Alzheimer's, and I look forward to continuing those discussions into the future.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Opposition, final question.

[End of Question Period]

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

We'll give you an opportunity to do some action this afternoon. Will you commit that you'll actually let an RN from your department of either health or social services and seniors go and work for this organization in the respite program. At least that way they're going to be able to continue to provide respite services and not be cut back. You can do that. You have a number of nursing staff. Will you at least commit to that this afternoon?

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

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

I'm not prepared as the minister to commit to any services until we have a formal request from the Alzheimer Society. I'm extremely open to look at creative ways to provide services for this very important issue. I want to continue to respect the processes. We do engage with unions. We have to be very respectful of the process.

But I'll continue to look at creative ways to enhance the quality of services for individuals living with dementia in this province.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**Speaker:** Thank you.

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